THE SILKEN EAST

A RECORD OF LIFE AND TRAVEL IN BURMA

BY

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Comptroller of Assam

WITH 400 ILLUSTRATIONS
INCLUDING 20 COLOURED PLATES
BY J. R. MIDDLETON, MRS. OTWAY WHEELER CUFFE
AND SAYA CHONE

VOL. I

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PREFACE

I WENT to Burma in the spring of 1891, and thereafter for three years I remained in Rangoon. I often think how slight a knowledge of Burma I should have carried away, had I left at the end of this period. Happily it came to me to travel during the next two years throughout the length and breadth of the land, and Burma in its true character was disclosed before my eyes. The idea of recording my impressions was constantly present in my mind at this time; but I did not write much. It seemed to me that the country was a big country, and that I might well spend a year or two in preparation.

But I was too liberal to myself. Domestic and personal troubles sent me home unexpectedly in the spring of 1896, and two years later, when I returned to the East, it was to find myself swept into quite another and very engrossing current of work in Northern India. But my thoughts were still often with Burma, and as I went to and fro amidst the splendid monuments of the Mogul Emperors; as I

lay for days and nights before Benares, moved by its wonder and its pageantry; as I travelled in the Himalaya and stood in the august presence of its snows, my hopes still went back to Burma and my project of this book. At last, in the winter of 1899, I had my desire. I looked once more upon the slender beauty of the Shway Dagôn, and committed myself once again to the bosom of the Irrawaddy. The greater part of what follows in this book was written during this second period of my stay in Burma. I hope that I have not failed in the effort to combine some substantial groundwork of knowledge with the vividness of a first impression. I hope that those of my countrymen who know Burma better than I do will not find my book inaccurate, and that those who have never been, and may never be, in Burma, will through its medium obtain something like a vital impression, a living picture—for that is my ambition—of one of the fairest and most attractive provinces of their Empire. I hope the time will come when the people of this little nation will be rated at their just value, and studied with the sympathy which is distinct from the sentiment of personal gain. Japan, which Burma much resembles, is already fast passing into the category of modern civilisation; its ideals are shaping swiftly in the direction of ships of war, and armed battalions, and

economic competition. I wish I could hope with confidence that Burma were in a fair way to taking its relinquished place, as, under happy auspices, it might.

As my book is mainly limited to my own impressions, I do not think I need make any specific acknowledgments here, so far as its written portion is concerned; but a word is necessary as to the pictures. A great many of them were made by me with the express purpose of illustrating this narrative; but Burma is a big country, and I have been glad to accept the aid of others in completing the series of my pictures. My thanks are due in the first instance to Mr. Benny of the Irrawaddy Flotilla and Mr. Grant Brown of the Civil Service. I am especially glad to have Mr. Benny's pictures, for they stand in a manner for the great organisation to which Burma owes so much, and they remind me personally of many kindnesses received as a traveller at the hands of its officers. I wish to acknowledge also the courtesy of Signor Beato, Mr. P. Klier, Mr. Francis, and Messrs. Bourne & Shepherd in permitting me to draw occasionally upon their stores. My acknowledgments are due in yet higher measure to my good friend, James Middleton, for the coloured illustrations in this book, which he has allowed me to have copied from some of the paintings made by him during a stay of several years

in Burma. There is no Englishman who knows the Shway Dagôn better than he does, and if he took to writing his impressions, I fear that my own vocation would be at an end. He is the only painter who has devoted himself to Burma, and his pictures are a revelation and a record of its beauty.

Almost the whole of this book is new; but the chapter on the Irrawaddy Defiles appeared first in *The Century Magazine* (New York), and some account of my cruise in the Mergui Archipelago was given by me in *The Pioneer* newspaper (Allahabad). I am obliged to their Editors for permission to republish these articles here. To my friend Mr. Henry W. Cave, whose books on Ceylon have long been a delight to lovers of Eastern life and scenery, I am obliged for the perusal of the final proof-sheets of this book, and for many other kindnesses.

The cover design of these volumes is by Miss Christabel Yeats, of the Herkomer School.

O'C.

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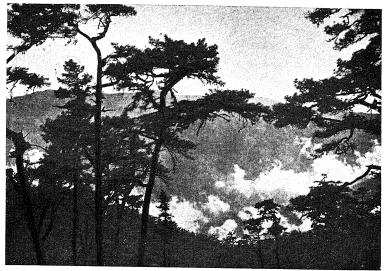
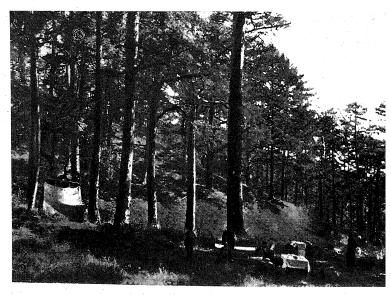
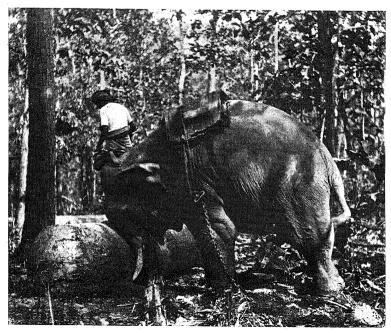
CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY

BURMA, the country described in this book, occupies a remote corner of South-eastern Asia. Hidden away there in the folds of mountains which

MOUNT VICTORIA

reach down like the fingers of a hand from the heights of Asia to the sea, it has had leisure to develop a character and personality of its own. Its best friends in this sense have been these mountains, which have

protected it on the one hand from the aggression of Indian invaders, on the other from the enormous absorbing power of China. Yet placed as it were between these vast millstones, it would be surprising had it escaped all traces of their contact. From India it has received the religion, which more than any other factor has moulded the Burmese people; from India there came to it the earliest impulse of civilisation. The influence of China is less patent. On successive occasions Burma has been called upon to resist with all its power the military aggression of the Chinese races; on one notable occasion it received through them a blow from which its civilisation has never recovered; and from time to time it has gone some

EXPLORER'S CAMP, MOUNT VICTORIA

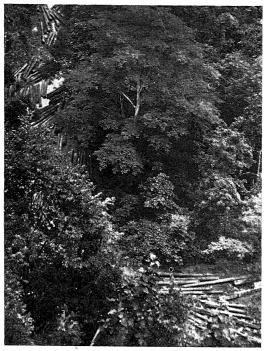
way towards accepting the suzerainty of China. But the influence of China has been social rather than political. The instinct of race has taught the two people their essential kinship, and if the Burman is proud of his quite mythical descent from the princes

MOVING THE FELLED LOG

of India, he is much more in his daily life in sympathy with the Chinaman, in whom he recognises an "elder brother."

But the mountains which have hitherto preserved the nationality of this people are no longer a protection. The sea has opened the floodgates of invasion, and under the political supremacy of England, the economic

competition of inferior and cheaper races from India, and of the superior Chinese now crowding up from the Straits, the Burmese personality runs in some peril of extinction. There is no longer a Court to form the heart of any national feeling; there is no longer, it would seem, any motive in keeping the race supreme in its own country; and there is lacking in the people that sternness which might alone, in the absence of such fostering influences, help to maintain their idiosyncrasy intact. It will be seen, then, that I am concerned with an interesting people at a very interesting period in their history.

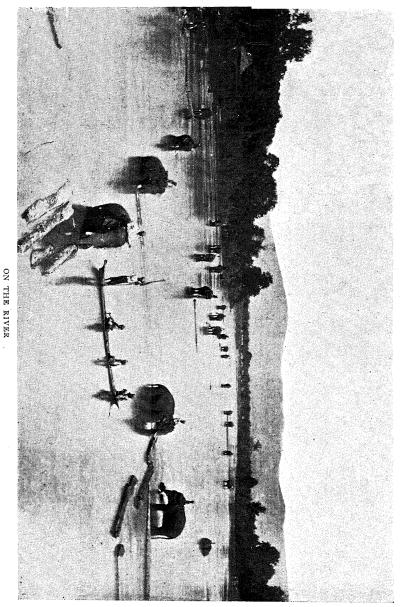
Of these mountains, which reach down like the fingers of a hand from the great arm of the Himalaya to make the country of Burma, the first are the Aracan Yoma, known to the main stock of the Burmese race as the Mountains of the West. On one side of them there lies the sea (the Bay of Bengal)—on the other the river Irrawaddy. The habitable land along their sea-swept threshold is known as Aracan—the home of a great branch of the Burmese race. The mountains themselves are inhabited by a kindred people known as the Chin; more numerous, more warlike, more organised in the north, where the width of the mountains is greater, than in the south. East of them lies the valley of the Irrawaddy, the true Burma, the spacious cradle of the race. This valley is shut in still further on the east by the Shan highlands, which spread away in waves to the Salwin river. They provide a home for the Shan, a race that long struggled

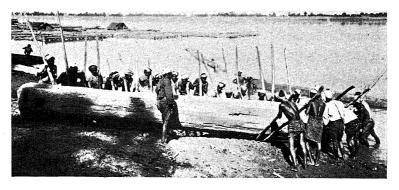
with the Burmese for the possession of the valley, but has ended by holding the lesser heritage of the Shan plateau under the suzerainty of Burma. Beyond the Salwin lie Siam and the Far Eastern territories of France

TEAK LOGS READY FOR THE TORRENT

The valley of the Irrawaddy, narrow and confined in the north, opens out at Mandalay, the capital of the race, and widens as it reaches the sea. It culminates in one of the finest of deltas. South of Mandalay the parallel valley of the Sittang has its being, the outcome of the low range of Pegu hills

JAMMED TIMBER

which separate it from the Irrawaddy, and of the Shan hills, which in the south fall away somewhat to the east. The Salwin, for the greater part of its course a river essentially foreign, enters the limits of Burma in its last hundred miles, and pours its waters into the Burmese seas under the golden spires of Moulmein. The mountains reach down in a narrowing peninsula to Victoria Point, the southernmost limit of Burma. This last strip of coast is known as Tenasserim. It is thinly populated, and it has never played any substantial part in the development of the race. An archipelago of singular interest and beauty lies off its western face, and some four thousand islands own its supremacy.

ON THE RIVER

One great river, the Chindwin, remains to be mentioned. Coming down from the mountains that lie about the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy, it flows through the Hukong valley and under the Chin territories, through scenery of great beauty, till it enters the valley of the Irrawaddy and adds its quota to the volume of that great river.

The capitals of this country are Mandalay and

ASHORE

Rangoon; the former located in the centre of Burma, where the widening valley leaves space for the growth of a nation; the latter at the mouth of the Irrawaddy, facing the sea. Mandalay stands for the old *régime*, as the city of Shah Jehan in India stands for the glory of the Moguls. Rangoon, like Calcutta, is the outcome of British rule.

The nature of the country, of its landscape and its

climate, may be gathered from its conformation. It is a long country reaching from the tenth to the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude. In its extreme south the sensation of cold is unknown. Save that there is more rain at one season than at another, there is little to choose at Mergui between June and December. In the far north, on the borders of China, the cold is bitter of winter nights, and men go clad in fur-lined satins. In the middle country a great dryness prevails, and the rainfall, excessive at either end, is reduced there to twelve inches a year.

The great river Irrawaddy marshalled by hills and mountains makes scenery that is as stately as it is beautiful; as passionate as it is serene. The mountains visited by tropical rains sustain forests of primeval growth, in which herds of elephants and rhinoceroses, of wild cattle and deer, wander in comparative peace; and at their summits, reaching in Mount Victoria a height of eight thousand, and in Saramati a height of twelve thousand feet, there grow the trees and flowers of temperate climates, the oak, the pine, and the violet. The gleam of snow upon Saramati and the more distant mountains of the northern *hinterland* remind the traveller in Burma that he has put the tropics behind him. In the flat lands of the Delta the largest surplus rice crop of the world is produced; in the Mogôk valley there lie buried the finest of rubies. And lastly there is the sea with its infinite variety. All along the coast it runs in a million ramifications into the land, and the traveller for whom such travel

A RAFT OF TEAK LOGS

has any fascination is borne, as in Aracan, for days through an amphibious world, a bewildering network of creeks, in which all comprehension of geography is lost. And in the far south there are those islands of which a particular account is given in this book.

THE TOMB OF ALOMPRA AT SHWEBO

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLES

VARIED as is this country, it is surpassed in variety by the number of races that occupy it. I can only mention the principal of them here: viz.,

The Burmese.
The Shan.
The Mun or Talaing.
The Karen.
The Chin.
The Kachin.
The Salôn.

Of these the Burmese are beyond comparison the most numerous. It is the Burmese idiosyncrasy that gives to Burma its fascination and its charm; that makes of it, with its colour, its luxury, its beauty, and its ease, a Silken East. Of the other races, the smallest and most backward are the Salôn, a fast-dying people of some thirteen hundred souls who inhabit the islands of the southern coast. They are probably the oldest inhabitants of the land. Since their day Burma has been peopled by three great waves of immigration from the north. Of these the earliest is represented by the Mun or Talaing; the second and third by the

KAREN MAN AND WIFE

Burmese (including the Chin) and the Shan. The Karen, who are of kin, stand as yet in a category apart. The Kachin are of the same stock as the Burmese, but their descent into Burma is of recent date.

PALAUNG WOMAN AT SHWEGÚ FAIR

THE MUN

A hundred and fifty years ago, the Mun were still a people, and Englishmen and Frenchmen leaned now towards the one, now towards the other of these conflicting races. But to-day the Mun are all but absorbed in the Burmese race, and three hundred thousand people alone represent in Burma a race whose civilisation once extended from the Assam hills to Annam. Broadly speaking they are now indistinguishable except as to language from the Burmese. People who know them well can, however, distinguish between them; and on the whole the Mun is apt to be fairer and stouter than the true Burman. Of kin with the Mun, but separated from them by a wide space of country, are the Palaung,

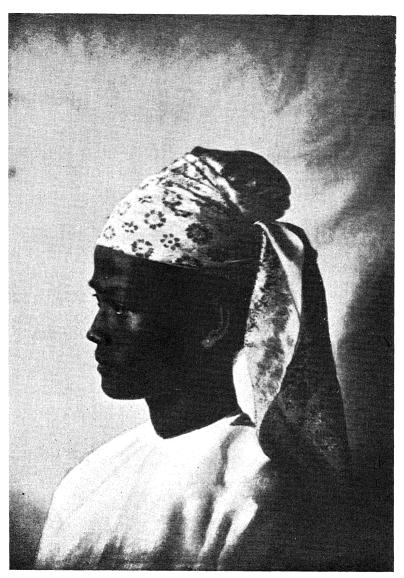
of whom numbers frequent the bazaars of the ruby mines. The Palaung run to sixty thousand souls. The men wear the Shan dress, the women a picturesque costume of their own, which comprises a hood, coat, and skirt, with leggings of cloth. Upon the English mind, the Palaung does not leave an altogether favourable impression. He is described as peaceful and industrious, but at heart a coward, and in his money transactions a Hebrew of pronounced proclivities; in business ability and wit superior to his Kachin neighbour, but in the sterner qualities his inferior. The Palaung, in fact, are a little and an oppressed people, who must have been swallowed up in the Kachin advance had we not come to shelter them under the cloak of Imperial rule.

THE KAREN

The Karen, far more numerous and more powerful than the Palaung, are also a people who owe their regeneration to British protection. Borne down by the dominant Burmese, they must have been gradually annihilated, or at best reduced to the least hospitable portions of the country. The Pax Britannica has given them political freedom, and Christianity, which they have adopted *en masse*, has given them self-respect and an impetus towards civilisation. In the modern history of Christianity, there is no more interesting episode than the conversion of the Karen. Prepared by prophecies current among them, and by curious traditions of a biblical flavour, they embraced with

fervour the new creed brought to them by the missionaries, and there are to-day upwards of a hundred thousand Christian Karen in Burma. The Karen occupy a long strip of country on the east of Burma, and a considerable portion of the Delta of the Irrawaddy By temperament the Karen differ radically from their Burmese neighbours. They are singularly devoid of humour, they are stolid and cautious, and they lack altogether the light gaiety and fascination of the Burmese. Yet it is not suggested that in some qualities they do not surpass them. If their origin is still obscure, it is at least certain that they are not the aborigines of the land. All their traditions point the other way. "In my early travels," writes Mason, their picturesque apostle, "the Karen pointed out to me the precise spots where they took refuge in the days of Alompra, and where they

GIRLS AT A KAREN MISSIONARY SCHOOL

had come down and avenged themselves on their enemies; but when I asked them who built this city, as we stood together on the forest-clad battlements of a dilapidated fortification, they replied: 'These cities of our jungles were in ruins when we came here. This country is not our own. We came from the north, where we were independent of the Burmese and the Siamese and the Talaing who now rule over us. Then we had a city and a country of our own near Ava, called Toungoo. All the Karen of Siam, Burma, and Pegu came originally from that region.' When I asked for the time of their dispersion they were silent. The fact was clearly before them; but the retrospect was too obscure to determine the distance. Yet they saw far beyond Toungoo. On the edge of the misty horizon was the river of running sand which their ancestors had crossed before coming. That was a fearful trackless region, where the sands rolled before the winds like the waves of the sea. They were led through it by a chieftain who had more than human power to guide them." The river of running sand is boldly identified by Mason with the Gobi desert, of which Fa Hian, the Chinese pilgrim, has left this description: "There are evil spirits in this river of sand and such scorching winds that whosoever encountereth them dies, and none escape. Neither birds are seen in the air, nor quadrupeds on the ground. On every side as far as the eye can reach, if you seek for the proper place to cross, there is no other mark to distinguish it than the skeletons of those who have perished there; these alone seem to

A YOUNG BURMAN

indicate the route." But the identity of the traditional desert of the Karen with the desert of Gobi has yet to be established.

THE SHAN

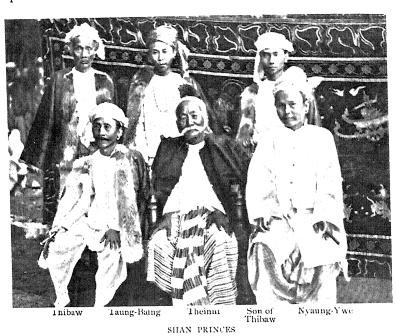
The Karen in Burma has to be looked for; the Shan with his wide trousers and flapping hat, his instinct of trade, his princes and feudatory states, and his considerable civilisation is a much more notable person.

The race began to spread into Burma from South-western China about two thousand years ago. Its migration was hastened by the pressure of the Chinese races behind, and as this pressure increased it spread from the valley of the Shweli river, its first home in Burma, southwards to

SHAN GIRL, BHAMO

the Siamese seas, eastward to Tongking, and north and west till it reached the Brahmaputra and founded the Ahom kingdom of Assam. The Shan are now found in Burma, in the Shan States, and far down the eastern peninsula to Mergui. In the north they spread over the whole of the upper territories of the

Thibaw Taung-Baing Theinni Son of Thibaw Nyaung-Ywe

SHAN PRINCES

Irrawaddy from Myitkina to the Third Defile; and along the Chindwin, where traces of their former supremacy survive in the principalities of Singkaling-Hkamti and Thaungdut. They have ruled at Ava, and have come near to the mastery of Burma. They owe their failure to their inability to combine on any national scale. In economic qualities they surpass the

Burmese, adding yet another to the list of competing peoples destined, unless the latent vigour of the Burman awakes, to divide up his heritage.

CHIN AND KACHIN

The Chin and Kachin have bulked largely in the

SHAN OF THE YUNZALIN

recent history of Burma. Long after Thibaw, the last of her kings, had been carried away to a sordid exile, and the British peace had been established over the land, the Chin and the Kachin continued to make war upon the Empire. The plains of Burma had long been their plundering grounds, where men and cattle lay at

the mercy of their raids. They were more habituated to individual war than the more civilised Burmese, and their protection lay in the rough hills which they inhabit, and in the poverty of their country, which is of small attraction to people better furnished with the good things of this world. The Chin, if anything, made a more vigorous resistance because they realised that the

SHAN-CHINESE LADS

final conquest of their country was at issue; the Kach had an extensive *hinterland* to which they knew tl they could retreat. But of the two the Kachin the sterner man, with a greater future before h than the Chin. And this is illustrated by the relati ship to Burma in which we found them. The Cl lived in his hills, making raids only at intervals on plain country at his feet. But the Kachin was stea advancing, dominating the peoples before him,

VILLAGE BALLET

VILLAGE BALLET

establishing his colonies. He had already instilled, at the Court of Thibaw, a substantial fear.

Of the Chin who lie upon the mountains which separate the true Burma from Aracan and Assam there are two great divisions—the Northern and the Southern. Of these the Southern Chin, living as they do upon the narrowest portion of their country, are of the least consequence. They have yielded most to the pressure of the Burmese races on each side

CHINS OF MOUNT VICTORIA

of them, and they are a sparse and disorganised people. Their tribes lap over into the subsidiary valleys which lie between the Irrawaddy and the main spine of the Aracan Yoma. The Northern Chin have a wider territory, known administratively as "The Chin Hills." It consists of a much broken and contorted mass of mountains, intersected by deep valleys, and it is utterly devoid of plains and tablelands. The Northern Chin have a strong tribal organisation, and time has developed in each of their tribes a separate idiosyncrasy. The

Chin is of interest, because he reveals the material out of which Buddhism and civilisation have between them evolved the Burmese people: the Chin, in short, is the rough wood out of which the Burman has been carved.

SIYIN CHIN

THE BURMESE

Of the Burmese as a whole I do not propose to give here any formal account.

I seek only to describe the life of the people as I have come upon it in the course of many years of travel in their country; and, for the most part, what I have to say will be found interspersed in the narrative of travel. But of the man himself I should like here to say a few words.

Physically the Burman is, for his size, one of the finest of men. He is short; but he is well made, broad-chested, stout-limbed, and muscular. A "weedy" Burman, outside the small percentage of the large towns and the sedentary occupations, is rare. The boatman, the cartman, the peasant, the artificer, is nearly always a strong man, capable, when put to it, of great effort. Living as he does in a tropical climate,

:ADAME

FROM THE YAWDWIN

abjuring meat from religious scruples, branded as incorrigibly lazy by all his critics, he is yet as a rule a man in fine training, full of momentum and vivacity. The criticism to which he is subjected on the score of laziness is overdone. For there is laziness and laziness. There is the laziness, for instance, of the man who shirks work, who slouches about, with thin legs, a stooping back, and an effete mind; a man to whom strenuous labour is no joy, yet a man who works on, day after day, putting in his tale, driven by the desire for a wage, by his own prolific pauperism, and the low standard of

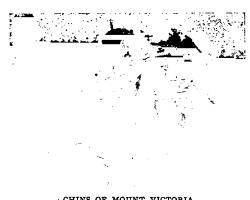
CHINESE SHAN LADY

life to which he has reached; a man without reserve force, without latent enthusiasms; a slave—such a man for instance as the Chittagonian; one of the economic superiors of the Burman. There is also the laziness of the man with a fine physique, with a sporting nature that exults in athletic expression, in racing, swimming, boxing, and rowing; of the man whose mind is full of lively fancy, of wit, of creative power; of the man who enjoys life and finds in it infinite possibilities of amusement, of love, of good fellowship; a man who has fashioned for himself a goodly standard of life, who lives well with little toil; above all, of a man whose being is permeated with a philosophic contempt for

CHINESE SHAN LADY

TAUNGTHU WOMEN

the accumulation of material things, with a generous desire to bestow in charity and in good works all that is over and above his own needs. Such is the laziness of the Burman. It is reflected in all his life.

Put him on the river he loves, with a swift and angry current against him, and he is capable of superb effort. Turn his beautiful craft, enriched with exquisite carvings, down stream, with wind and tide in his favour, and he will lie all day in the sun, and exult in the Nirvana of complete idleness. And this is not because he is "a lazy hound," as I have heard him called, but because he is a philosopher and an artist; because there is a blue sky above him which he can look at, a river before him

CHINS OF MOUNT VICTORIA

rippling with colour and light ; because the earning of pence is a small thing to him by comparison with the joy of life, and material things themselves but an illusion of the temporary flesh.

But the world, you will say, is not a world of

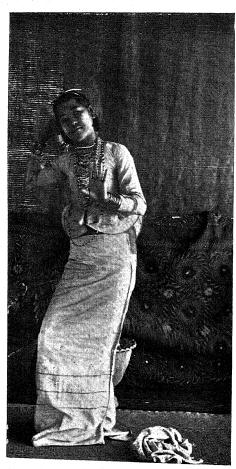
TAKING HIS EASE

philosophers and artists, but an economic world, of manufacturers, of creators and distributors of wealth ; and since that is the case, there is no room in it for people of this kind, unless by extraordinary efficiency in their own pursuits they are able to compete with the rest of mankind. And in any case the demand

for such goods is limited. Well! I do not think that I have anything to say in answer to such criticism. The Burman is lazy, the Burman must go, unless he is willing to work like the aboriginal Coringhi, from early dawn to night; unless he is willing to accept in the long run a wage like that of the Indian proletariat, of whom many millions live all their lives upon the verge of starvation; unless he is willing to wear grey cotton instead of tartaned silk; unless he is willing to forgo his hospitalities to his friends, his donations to his church, his liberality to the stranger within his gates; unless he is willing to abandon his gaiety, his light-heartedness, his love of sport and amusements, his leisure and happiness, and turn to the cheap, inferior, squalid life of his Indian neighbour.

"FULL OF LAUGHTER AND FUN"

Yet of all the peoples of the earth the Burmese are probably the happiest. Most of the requisites of modern Utopias they already possess: leisure, independence, absolute equality, the nearest approach to

a perfect distribution of wealth; in addition, a happy temper, cheerful in all adversities. Who is there in the world who would not wish for some, at least, of these things for himself? And many, struggling with all the problems of modern life, of pauperism, of congestion in great cities, with social hatreds and the deep antagonisms of classes, look in vain, as for an unattainable thing, for what the Burmese race as a whole has attained. Yet no sooner do we come upon such a thing, even though it comes to us as a trust—for the Empire is nothing if it is not a Great Trust—than we begin to find fault with it, to lavish our contempt upon it, and to hold up as an ideal that very thing from which the civilised world is trying to escape—

THE DANCER

THE MOTHER

pauperism, the unequal distribution of wealth, the hatreds of class. I say "we" advisedly, since it is a commonplace to hold the Burman up to contempt as an incorrigibly

THE DAUGHTER

lazy and shiftless fellow, to treat him as (economically) the least worthy member of the Indian Empire, to which only in an administrative sense can he be supposed to belong. Yet I doubt if there are many Englishmen in Burma—whose sympathies in this matter

are not largely with the Burman—to whom the presence of the inferior immigrant from India is not something of an offence.

The real fault of the Burmese character lies in its lack of "grit"; not in any of those other qualities

THE OLD MAN

which are drawn like a red herring across the scent, in popular estimates of it. Continuity of purpose, steady determination, the faculty of depth—these the Burman lacks. And the explanation simply lies in this—that he is racially still a child; a very clever and promising child, with great aptitudes, with much

latent power and singular sweetness of character; but with the faults—the passionate temper, the cruelty, the want of self-control—of a child. Here is no effete race, a people who have lived their life, a people to be superseded and wiped out; but a people to be fostered, to be encouraged, to be helped on their way for what they must ultimately contribute to the pleasure and the happiness of the world. In this I do not merely speculate, for the Burman has already done much to justify a good opinion of him.

GIRL AT THE PAGODA

To pass him over without mentioning his wife and daughter would be uncivil, and also in this case dull; for the sex contributes greatly to the liveliness and charm of the country. Burma, as in many other things, is in advance of more reputedly civilised countries in the status it accords to its women. The infant marriages and shutting up in walled houses, the polygamy, the harems, the social punishment of widows, the denial of spiritual rights, which prevail in the neighbouring

continent of India, are unknown in Burma. Here women marry when they are of age, and after they have seen somewhat of the world; they marry, for the most part, whomsoever they will, and from love. They are not handed over as chattels to a man whom they know not; but are courted and won. The Married Women's Property Act, a recent flower of British civilisation, has in effect been established for centuries in Burma. In this country, where the women earn so much, the woman's earnings are her own. Divorce is easily obtained; but seldom asked for. The lightness of the marriage laws, the readiness of the Burmese woman to enter into an easy alliance, shock the virtue of the strenuous foreigner; but within her ideals she is a perfectly proper, modest, and well-mannered woman. She is of the world to her finger tips, and at theatres and elsewhere her appreciation of the sallies of the actors is of Elizabethan frankness; yet her conduct

A PAGODA TRUSTEE

there is beyond reproach. Amorous vulgarities in public are unknown in Burma. When she is young, the Burmese woman is, after her own type, fair and

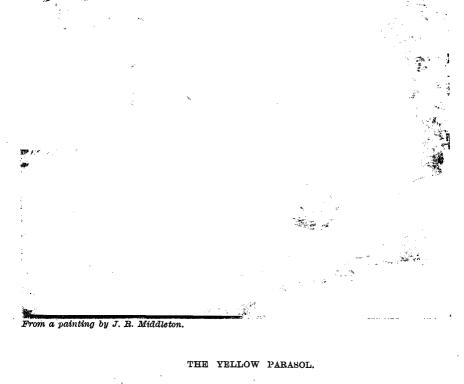
BEGINNING LIFE

attractive, full of laughter, and fun, and the enjoyment of life; witty and self-possessed; seldom, if ever, brazen-faced; frank to a degree. It is one of the wayside amusements of travel in Burma to see her at her toilette before the world, to see her calmly unwind

the false tresses in her hair (itself generally luxurious and ample); to see her enamel her face with ingenuous *thanaka*, to follow her frequent contented glances at her mirror. And later in life she is capable, when circumstances are in her favour, of great dignity, and exquisite manners. She dresses, when not reduced to the poverty which economists seem to desire for her, in a very charming way; in a delicately coloured silken skirt, a white muslin jacket, with a silk scarf thrown over her shoulders, and flowers in her hair. And while she dresses well, she is free of the tyranny of fashion, the unending longing after something that is new. She has failings; who has not? Her practice of chewing betel is inelegant and destructive to her teeth; her voice is apt under the pressure of adversity to be shrill; her keen business faculties detract a trifle from the romance in which, as in a halo, all women are enveloped; in old age she is very ugly; and even in youth her nose is stumpy, her lips a little thick, her cheek-bones high and heavy—but these are Caucasian objections! In the eyes of the young men of the land,

A BURMESE MAIDEN

From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

THE YELLOW PARASOL.

the Burmese girl is a peerless creature; and her influence over their hearts and their passions is immense. What is more, few men in Burma ever undertake anything of magnitude without first seeking the able counsel of their wives.

I cannot leave even this slight account of the men and women of Burma without saying a separate word about its old men, and its little children. Vain, bumptious, arrogant as the Burman is apt to be in his youth, old age brings with it, for him, a wonderful change. His manners become gentle and reserved, his face catches a spiritual expression. His costume is adapted to his years. The flaming tartans of his youth are put aside for silks of a paler hue; the gorgeous *gaungbaung* is replaced on his head by a slender fillet of white book-muslin. But the change is not merely superficial. It is the reflection of an inner development, of the growth within him of the spiritual desire. If, unlike most of his countrymen, he has accumulated a store of wealth, his aim now is to distribute it in good works. If any worldly desire survives in his heart, it is to win the title of Phaya-Taga, "Builder of a Pagoda," or Kyaung-Taga, "Builder of a Monastery"; titles bestowed upon him by his fellows as an expression of their respect, and dearer to him, as implying a spiritual attainment, than any magnificence, such as "Bearer of a Golden Sword," that the State may bestow upon him. This vanity is the last infirmity of his mind; and to the end of his days he is particular that his wife shall address him by his

full title of "Builder of a Monastery." The good lady is more than willing, for the glory of her husband is reflected upon herself, and it is with her willing consent that the distribution of his wealth proceeds. He also, in calling to her in the presence of strangers, will be particular to address her as Kyaung-Taga-mah, or "O Wife of the Builder of a Monastery." Religious duties at this season of his life greatly occupy his attention. A rosary is constantly in his hand, and upon his lips there move all the day long, when he is alone, the phrases of his faith. He is much at the pagoda, to which he climbs, in spite of his failing powers, each day with an offering of flowers; and his constant haunt is the local monastery, his own if he be a Kyaung-Taga, where he sits reverently at the feet of the abbot, listening to pious homilies, and in moments of weakness retailing the day's news. I know of no country in the world in which old age comes so serenely upon its men as Burma, no country in which the movement towards better things at this

AT THE LOOM

A SON OF THE JUNGLE

season is so universal; and it has long been a pleasure to me to see these old men going to and fro upon the closing business of their lives, to come upon them at the monasteries, and to talk with them. For the manners of even the humblest of them are grave and fine.

At the other end of life to the old men are the small children. In them the liveliness and happiness of the race are crossed by no flaw. The sheer joy of life abides in them, and they seem to live perpetually at play; in the village street, where they play a game of ninepins with the great seeds of a jungle creeper; in the monastery, where they lie upon the floor and scream out their lessons with lusty delight; in the river, in which they splash and plunge before they can walk; at the play, where they crawl about amongst the feet of the prima donna and the posing kings; and at the pagoda, where they hold flowers before them with faces screwed up to gravity, with laughter pent up behind it. And if there be any dispute about the good looks of their elders, there can be none as to the prettiness of Burmese children. A little Burmese girl or boy is the most doll-like creature in the world

Children's clothes, as such, are unknown in the simple economy of Burma, and every little girl is dressed like her mother, from her sandals to the flowers in her hair; and every little boy like his father, in a tartan kilt, a white muslin jacket, and flaming *gaung-baung* on his head—that is, when he is dressed at all. In the country, and within the precincts of his own home, he is apt to go about with nothing on at all.

KATHE BRAHMIN

Book II

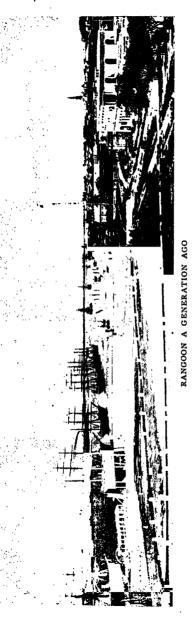
THE CAPITAL

Its Beginnings—The Modern City—The City at Night—The Puzun-Daung Creek—The Shway Dagôn

CHAPTER III

ITS BEGINNINGS

A CITY which faces the ocean, whence world-travellers come, and is itself served by a river navigable for nine hundred miles, the main artery through which the life-blood of a nation pulses, is a city that is clearly destined to be great. Yet it is only in the last half-century of the many during which these conditions necessary to the birth of a great city have in some measure prevailed, that Rangoon has responded to them. Why not sooner, it would be difficult to say. The causes which make great cities and great nations seem as palpable on the surface as in reality they are mysterious and obscure. One may infer that some psychologic moment is necessary, some sudden and subtle coming together, in order that from causes long known to exist the new and splendid offspring should be born. Yet there are circumstances which partly explain the long delay before Rangoon definitely stepped out into the highway of its present prosperity. There was a time when the sea ran into the coast of Burma much farther than it does to-day; when ships cast anchor at Thatôn, the earliest capital of the south; when

RANGOON A GENERATION AGO

Pegu, in later days the gorgeous and magnificent city of Brangi-noco, was almost itself a seaport. There was a time also when the ocean brought less to the gates of Burma and took less away than it does in its iron ships to-day; when the absence of a strong hand and a settled peace within the country frightened away Trade, as timid as she is daring; when war slew a million of men in a single generation; when civilisation, in fact, had not yet come to marshal the resources of the nation, and to stay.

Moreover, there was already across the water a city which is now forgotten; whose history is the true history

of the beginnings of Rangoon. It was at Syriam that Rangoon, the city facing the sea and served by a lordly river, the main artery of a nation, first came into being. It was the fame of Syriam which brought men trafficking to the mouth of the river on which Rangoon is built, and it is the tale of Syriam, broken by adversity, that the newer city has taken up with new vitality.

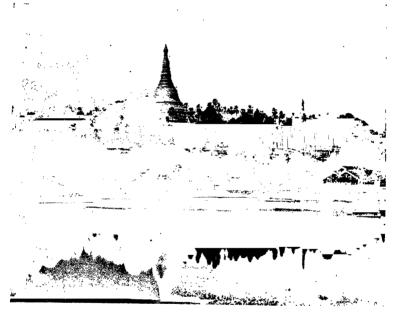
Viewed from this standpoint, Rangoon is no longer the *nouveau riche* loudly proclaiming his possessions, but a city that has been growing for many generations, a city which has known the flavour of great days in the past.

Syriam, according to the Burmese tale, began its career as a king's city five hundred and eighty-seven years before the birth of Christ. But cities which depend on kings are prone to lapse into insignificance, and there is practically nothing known of Syriam till the discoveries of Vasco da Gama, that great pioneer, opened the gates of the East to Western adventurers, and half the galleons of Europe trimmed their sails for the new El Dorado. The known history of Syriam is the history of their efforts to capture one of its great prizes; and it is a strange circumstance that all, until within the last century, should have failed. But Burma, in spite of her charms, is apt, from her situation, to be overlooked by travellers with the lust of India in their eyes; and to this circumstance she probably owed her immunity. Men straining every nerve for the conquest of India had little attention to bestow upon her smaller and less sumptuous neighbour.

Yet the Portuguese, heroic in all their early enterprises, made a great bid for sovereignty in Burma; and it was at Syriam that the drama was played out. The tale is connected with the career of one Philip de Brito y Nicote, who began as a cabin boy, grew as a palace menial in Aracan, rose to be King of Pegu, and ended writhing on a stake in the sun, where he lingered for three days in mortal agony, overlooking the city which for the space of thirteen years had been the centre of his power. But the story of De Brito is not for these pages.

The site of Rangoon itself is an immemorial one, and the chronicles of the people talk with customary liberality in thousands of years. Five hundred and eighty-five years before Christ, they say, two pious merchants who trafficked to Bengal with Peguan rice came at a time of famine upon the Buddha meditating under the trees of Gaya. Asked whether they sought the goods of this world or the next, they replied with becoming piety that they were in search of "heavenly treasure." They then made their obeisances before the Buddha, and received four hairs of his head and were told to bury them in the Thein-Got-Tara Hill, where his three predecessors had left respectively a staff, a water-filter, and a robe. They were to know the locality from a *takoon*, a felled wood-oil tree lying athwart, and touching the ground neither with its root nor its branches.[1] On their return, after a somewhat distracting search, they found the place indicated, and they buried in it, in

[1] As with most popular etymology, there is no reality in this derivation.

a golden casket, the relics they had brought. Over them was built the first nucleus of the Shway Dagôn Pagoda. The town of Takoon or Dagôn grew up around this sacred spot, and from time to time there is mention in Burmese history of visits to it from kings and princes, and of the gradual growth of the pagoda. Stone

THE PAGODA

inscriptions in the courts of the pagoda date back to the year 1485, and it is well known that Shinsawbu, Queen of Pegu early in the sixteenth century, visited the town and greatly enlarged the pagoda.

The first account of it that we have from any European observer is that in 1579 of Gasparo Balbi,

THE LEGEND OF THE SHWAY DAGÔN IN WOOD

jeweller of Venice. Balbi entered Burma at Negrais, and having made "a very commodious and pleasant voyage" across the Delta to Pegu, came to Dagôn.

"After we were landed," he says, "we began to go on the right hand in a large street about fifty paces broad, in which we saw wooden houses gilded and adorned with delicate gardens after their custom, wherein their *talapoins*, which are their friers, dwell and look to the pagod, or varella, of Dagôn. The left side is furnished with portals and shops, and by this street they go to the varella for a good mile straight forward, either under paint-houses or in the open street, which is free to walk in." The town was in fact an appanage of the Shway Dagôn Pagoda, and it continued to preserve

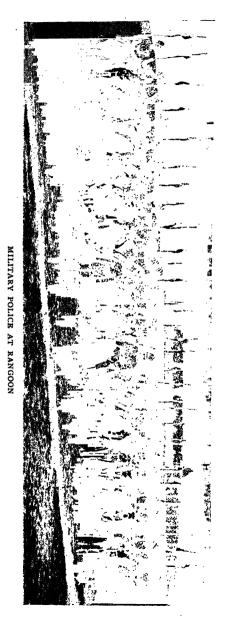
this character with varying fortunes till the growth across the water of Syriam, thronged with the ships of European adventurers, brought it political importance. The final phase in the struggle of the Burmese and the Mun or Talaing races was now approaching. At last in 1763 A.D. Alompra, having annihilated Pegu, signalised his conquests by raising the Shway Dagôn to a height greater than that of the rival Mun fane at Pegu, and bestowed upon the city at its feet the name of Yan-koon, the City of Victory. It was made the seat of a viceroy and considerable traffic passed through its gates; yet it had not really made any beginning towards greatness. The accounts of travellers vary at this period concerning

THE LEGEND OF THE SHWAY DAGÔN IN WOOD

it. Some, like Colonel Symes, the British Ambassador who visited Burma a hundred years ago, give it a character of importance; others, like the officers who accompanied the British Army to Burma in 1825, find little to say in its favour. In Symes' day it lay upon the river shore and was a mile long and a third of a mile wide. The inner citadel was surrounded by an indifferent stockade, the streets were well paved, but inferior to those of Pegu. All the officers of Government, the most opulent merchants, and persons of consideration lived within the stockade. It had three wharves, and close to one of these there were "two commodious wooden houses, used by the merchants as an exchange, where they usually meet in the cool of the morning and evening to converse and transact business."

"We had been so accustomed," wrote Major Snodgrass some thirty years later, "to hear Rangoon spoken of as a place of great trade and commercial importance, that we could not fail to feel disappointed at its mean and poor appearance. We had talked of its Custom House, its dockyards, and its harbour, until our imaginations led us to anticipate, if not splendour, at least some visible sign of a flourishing commercial city; but however humble our expectations might have been, they must still have fallen short of the miserable and desolate picture which the place presented when first occupied by the British troops. The town, if a vast assemblage of wooden huts may be dignified with that name, is surrounded by a wooden stockade, from sixteen

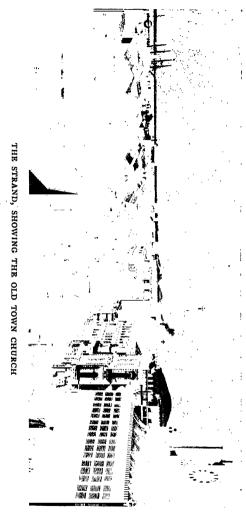
to eighteen feet in height, which effectually shuts out all view of the fine river which runs past it, and gives it a confined and insalubrious appearance. There are a few brick houses, chiefly belonging to Europeans, within the stockade, upon which a heavy tax is levied; and they are only permitted to be built by special authority from the Government, which is but seldom granted. The Custom House, the principal building in the place, seemed fast tottering into ruins. One solitary hull upon the stocks marked the dockyard, and a few coasting vessels and country canoes were the only craft found in this great commercial mart of India beyond

MILITARY POLICE AT RANGOON

the Ganges." Thus the indignant soldier. Greatness had evidently not yet come to Rangoon, although, even at this early period, it had begun to shout into the ears of the world; which is still one of its failings. From contemporary accounts of the town some sixty years ago the following particulars are taken.

The stockade covered an area of seventy-five acres, and lay roughly between the Sulé Pagoda and the Strand on one side, and Mogul Street and Ezekiel Street on the other. The Custom House lay on the river's edge outside the stockade. Within, there were two principal thoroughfares, one named the Kaladan, along which Armenians, Moguls, Parsis, Hindus, Jews, a few Chinamen, and other foreigners lived; and the other, the main street of the city, running east and west, past the "palace" of the viceroy, upon the site of which *The Rangoon Times* is now published. The European community consisted of ten persons; two of whom, Messrs. Crisp & Trill, had their place of business near where Balthazar's Buildings now stand, upon some of the most valuable land in Rangoon. Where 36th and Merchant Streets now meet, stood the British Residency, once occupied by Colonel Burney. Outside the stockade stood the house of Manook Sarkies, an Armenian resident; and in its neighbourhood, opposite the present site of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's office, was the yard in which he built a three-hundred-ton ship. The stockade was surrounded by a ditch, and a tidal stream ran up Latter Street. Shafraz Road remained till much later a canal. Buffaloes wallowed in

the marshes beyond Ezekiel Street; gardens spread east of the Sulé Pagoda; Puzun-Daung was a small village of boatmen; and jack and pineapple orchards like those of Kemendine spread where now the jail, the lunatic asylum, and St. John's College discharge their several functions.

THE STRAND, SHOWING THE OLD TOWN CHURCH

On worship days the Viceroy usually went to the pagoda, leaving the stockade to be ruled by his lieutenant. All fires had to be put out while he was absent, and failure to comply with this regulation brought upon the offenders the *paquets* or executioners, an outlawed tribe of police, who had a circle tattooed on each cheek and were known as "Spotted Faces." These people

found a vocation in perambulating the streets with hens' feathers in their ears, which they thrust into the ashes, "and if a feather was curled up by the heat, it meant blackmail upon the spot." Any effort to resist such exactions only led to worse ones at the hands of the town *wuns*. Each officer of note kept stocks in his yard, into which people were incontinently thrust on the most frivolous grounds; and the Rev. C. Bennet, to whose notes I am indebted, paints a quaint picture of stern parents and surly husbands suddenly put into stocks at the private instigation of their frivolous wives and unfilial children. To revenge one's self upon a friend it was only necessary, it seems, to speak a word into the covetous ear of one of the town *wuns*.

In 1841 the stockade was removed a mile or more inland from the river. Eleven years later it was carried at the point of the bayonet by the British troops. Traces of its earthworks may still be seen crossing the Prome road, where the Rangoon golfer pursues his dusty vocation. Rangoon was now incorporated in the British Empire, and definitely launched upon that career of prosperity which, in half a century, has lifted it to a city of a quarter of a million people and the position of third seaport in the Indian Empire. Life moves in its streets and waterways; prosperity, unbroken yet by any adverse fortune, smiles upon it; high hopes are entertained by all its citizens of a near future of still greater and almost boundless fortune. Every time that one who knows it returns to it, after

a lapse of even a year or two, he is struck with its growth in the interval, with its new buildings, its new streets, its new institutions, and its new pride. Yet its

PALMS IN ADVERSITY

new buildings at least should teach it humility. For a wave of terrible architecture has for some years been passing over the devoted city, and cathedrals, town halls, and public offices have been growing up which are a torment to the eye.

Happily it is not all new. It is served by an immemorial river upon whose bosom a great life pulses; it is dominated by an edifice whose stateliness and beauty are unsurpassed in Burma; and in its streets fifty races gather to give it picturesqueness. Unlike most Eastern cities, it is devoid of mystery. Its streets lie open to the eye, its life moves much upon the surface. Superficial visitors are apt to pass it by as of little interest. Yet there is much in it that will "repay investigation."

THE SULÉ PAGODA

Under this pagoda Alompra buried alive a Talaing Prince to keep watch and ward over his new city of Rangoon

CHAPTER IV

THE MODERN CITY

RANGOON'S most cosmopolitan thoroughfare is Mogul Street, which begins with the funnel of an ocean steamer, climbs up to the white minarets of a Musulman mosque, and ends under the wooden eaves of a Native Christian chapel. A Chettis' hall, with wooden columns, of a design that was probably invented in Southern India twenty centuries ago, faces the white temple of Islam, and the voice of the green-turbaned muezzin, as he calls the Faithful to prayer, is overborne by the clatter and chink of money, and the guttural brawlings of that loudest of vulgarians, the Chetti. Over the way, in an adjoining street, the Hindu clangs his bell and blows his conch before the altars of Shiv, in defiance of his Musulman neighbour. His Musulman neighbour retorts by sacrificing the sacred cow, and spilling her blood before the very eyes of those who worship her as a god. Gentle amenities of this kind, fomented by turbulent Afghans and by Hindu millionaires, whose care it is to establish an *alibi*, by retreating at the crisis to a safe distance of fifteen hundred miles, are apt occasionally to end in conflicts of a serious

MOGUL STREET

character. In 1893 they ended in a riot, which was only quelled after thirty persons had been shot down, some two hundred, mostly mounted policemen, had been wounded, and a regiment of English soldiers had been summoned to over-awe the populace. Often, as I drive down this crowded thoroughfare, past the archways of the mosque, I am reminded of the appearance it presented on that occasion, when its steps were slippery with the blood of mullahs and muezzins and chulias, pouring out of ragged wounds made by the sniders of the military

police. I am reminded of the latent forces of an ancient hate, under the new cosmopolitan unity of Rangoon.

For Mogul Street is a living bit of India. Except as a wayfarer, no Burman occupies it. Parallel to it, on the left as one faces the town, are Latter Street and Tsikai Moung Khine Street, with their tributaries, in which the Chinese community musters in force. It is a community of exclusive people, with an atmosphere and an architecture of its own; a community of rich merchants with broad views and the feelings and manners of gentlemen. The Englishmen, who stand at the top of the commercial ladder, readily admit that they would rather do business with the Chinaman than with any other Oriental in Rangoon. And this is as true of the carpenter who makes goods of mediæval solidity as it is of the leading Chinamen whose houses tower above

MINARETS IN MOGUL STREET

SURATI MOSQUE

the wide thoroughfares, an ornament to the city. Yet the Chinaman of Rangoon is not quite an angel in disguise; he is a man of many secret vices and one or two pronounced weaknesses. His leading clubs, modelled ostensibly on the lines of British institutions, cover a good deal of hard gambling; his secret societies are credited by rumour with some of the attributes of the Camorra; and most of his gains are made from liquor and opium, for which he takes out a licence from the State.

The Burman, whose capital this is, is retreating more and more into the suburbs. With his philosophic habits, his indolent ways, his love of good things, and his spiritual yearnings, he is no rival to the thrifty Surati, the aboriginal Coringhi, and the strenuous Chinaman.

To see him thoroughly at home one must now go as far as Kemendine. There, under the shade of the

THE GOLD MOHUR IN BLOOM

great trees, the sculptor of alabaster Gautamas plies his chisel, the umbrella-maker displays all the delicate feeling of the race for beautiful things in the manu-

facture of yellow and green transparencies of perfect design, the weaver weaves tape for binding palm-leaf manuscripts into texts from the sacred books, the lacquer artist paints and gilds his cabinets for the monastery libraries. There, in short, one who would see the Burman at work in his own way, and upon objects meant for Burmese use, must go. There are silver-workers and wood-carvers in Godwin Road and other thoroughfares of the city; but they cater almost solely for Europeans.

In the Surati Bazaar there is the most "Oriental" part of Rangoon. In its half-lit passages, its avenues bordered by stalls, in which the mixed populace of traders transact their business, there is somewhat that recalls the flavour of Smyrna and Stamboul; but it is a little flavour only, a thing in its beginnings. Here and there a silk-stall is kept by a daughter of the soil; but the majority of those who wait for the custom of the visitor are underbred Suratis with the mannerless manners that come to Orientals under British rule. The bazaar is owned by a company of Suratis whose enterprise forestalled that of the City Fathers. The shares of the Surati Bazaar Company are unpurchasable, and their dividends reach fabulous dimensions.

It is upon the south of Rangoon that the energy of the Municipality has long been concentrated. Enormous areas of land which were little better than buffalo pools half a century ago, and portions of which survived in that capacity to within a year or two ago, have been reclaimed at great expense, to provide for the growth

of the city. A resolute belief in its future is one of the best characteristics of Rangoon; and its confidence is likely to be justified. New blocks are being occupied, new streets are being made, new centres of life are being opened out—parks and gardens and offices—at

THE YELLOW (LABURNUM) ACACIA

this southern end of Rangoon, between the Puzun-Daung and the Hlaing. There is a fascination in the evident process of growth. Every year there is somewhat added, and in ten years there is an absolute transformation. Every time that I come back to Rangoon I walk out to look at the new town, the new houses,

the newly metalled roads, running between the wide unoccupied spaces of newly reclaimed land. Thinking of Rangoon I feel that the interest of it lies far more in the future than in the present or the past. If it were not already very proud of its achievements, it might adopt as its civic motto the phrase that Cicero applied to youth—"*Non res sed spes est.*" It has no history to speak of; no buried past. Here is no "rose-red city, half as old as time"; but it is full of life and colour, a kaleidoscope of races with a growing character of its own, and the joyous atmosphere of youth.

East of Rangoon lie the Royal lakes, and Dalhousie Park, which owes its inception to the great Viceroy. There is no city in the East with a finer playground, and in time, when the Victoria lakes which provide Rangoon with its drinking-water are added to the total of finished beauty, they will become famous. Some of the turf is as fine already as the turf of an English park. Amongst the trees are many of the sumptuous kind, which break into one dazzling mass of bloom, such as the pagoda-tree, the *padouk*, the *pinma*, and the laburnum acacia. These trees are already a feature of Rangoon; but their wealth is too widely scattered to make its full impression. It remains to collect them in long avenues of several miles of each species—the labour of a single generation—to make Rangoon in the spring-time a spectacle of the most striking beauty. The roads of the Municipality run into a hundred and twenty miles. I sometimes picture a

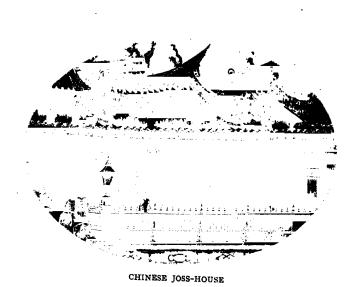
hundred and twenty miles of trees in the most dazzling, riotous bloom, each marshalled under its own kind.

The neighbourhood of the lakes is becoming more and more the resort of the wealthier classes. Villas,

THE PINK ACACIA IN BLOOM

many of them of considerable beauty, have sprung up of recent years in large numbers; and the descendants of those merchants who met a century ago on the main wharf of Rangoon to converse and transact business now pass the cool of the morning and evening in their country houses at Kokine.

Such is Rangoon the prosperous, the rising city. To catch some of the flavour of its romance one must leave its villadom and enter its crowded heart, and preferably at night. For the night is the time to judge of an Eastern city.

CHINESE JOSS-HOUSE

CHAPTER V

THE CITY AT NIGHT

THE sea-breeze blowing up with the tide freshens the night, and the streets swarm with a populace bent on relaxation. All men, and most women, come out at this hour. The pavements are crowded with those who minister to the public pleasure—the pine-apple man, with his tray of fruit; the Burmese girl, with her petty stall of cigars; the Hindu seller of betel, with his little mirror, to tempt the glance of the passing *beaux*; the lemonade man, with his moving barrow; the seller of ice-creams; the Chinaman under his swaying burden of cooked meats and strange luxuries; the vermicelli man; the Indian confectioner, with his silver-coated pyramids of sugar and cream. It is of all crowds one of the most cosmopolitan. Here the long-coated Persian, with his air of breeding and dignity, is jostled by the naked Coringhi, with rings in his nose; the easy beauty from Japan dashes by in her rickshaw, drawn by a Chinese coolie; the exclusive Brahmin finds himself shoulder to shoulder with a laughing daughter of the soil, who has never heard of caste, and would

make merry over it if the notion was presented to her mind; the Chetti rolls his obese person beside the straight-stepping soldier fresh from England; the Italian organ-man collects his coppers with humility, a white man in decay; a gentleman going out to dinner drives

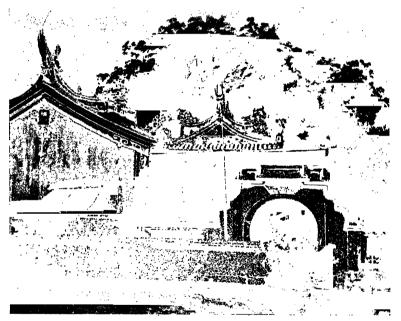
THE CHINAMAN

rapidly through the crowd, his dress-front flashing against the dark.

But the life is not all out of doors, and as the night grows it becomes concentrated within. Here is the new Burmese theatre, which is taking the place of the open-air entertainments of half a dozen years ago. A celebrated company is performing, and the most popular

From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

EVENING OF A PAGODA FESTIVAL.

prima-donna in Burma is on view. The audience are seated on the floor, with the exception of a number of small boys, who hang over the footlights and crawl on the stage amongst the legs of the actors. Sonorous declamation is the leading feature of the entertainment,

CHINESE TEMPLE NEAR RANGOON

varied by witty sallies which are much enjoyed by the spectators. It is some old story of a king and his court, which has little of definite interest in itself; but the sententious wisdom of the councillors, the immense dignity of the king, the atmosphere of royalty, are of great attraction; and every flash of wit is caught up in one instantaneous ripple of laughter. A large pro-

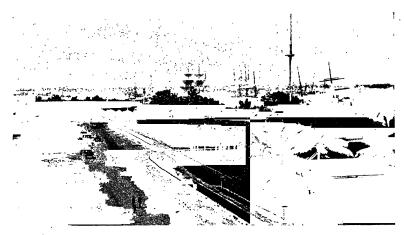
portion of the audience is made up of women, many of whom have brought their babes. Little girls, fascinated at first by the spectacle, soon fall asleep, and slumber peacefully till their parents are ready to go home in the

CHINESE GAMBLING AT A FAIR

morning. The audience, indeed, is far more interesting than the play. The women laugh in the discreetest way at the doubtful sallies of the actors. Their quick perception is only equalled by the innate modesty of their manners, and the perfect reserve that marks their re-

in two languages, a rush for the door; and the dramatic interlude is over. But outside there are broken heads and faces streaming with blood, and mariners who wish they had kept out of a hornets' nest. Episodes of this kind, whether brought about by an invasion from without or a quarrel within, are not infrequent at the play in Burma. But they are episodes with little power to stay the declamations of royal councillors and the posturings of tireless prima-donnas.

PALM-TREES IN BLOOM

As the night wears on men move away from the play to other haunts. Outside the little houses that flank the more secluded streets there sit the painted *demi-monde*, the women of half the world, from Paris to Japan; and they drift here by successive stages of decline, raking up here the very lees of life. There are other places, too, associated with the mid-

THE STRAND, LOOKING OUT TO SEA

night life of the city : the haunts of the opium smoker, where men lie as in a shambles, forgetful of time ; the inner parlour of the Ah-Sin club, where fan is played, and little cards are heaped with money on the tables. But the life of a city at night is of endless variety, and if it is undoubtedly interesting, it is somewhat unsavoury to chronicle. The river is not open to the same objection.

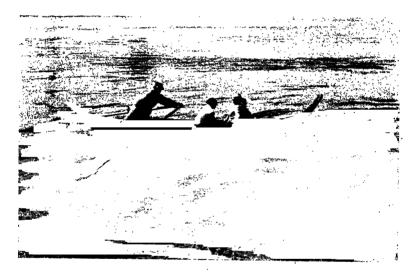
THE RIVER

On the dark road that winds between the Strand and the river's edge, all life seems stilled, save that of the overshadowing palms which rustle in every breeze. Behind me lies the city, with its brick avenues, its multitude of lights, and its swarming populace. A few yards ahead of the silence in which I am engulfed lies

the river. Under the laterite shore there gleam the white flanks of a forest of stakes, lean and vague against the dark. Lashed to them there ride upon the waters a fleet of sampans, and as the waves lap their sides, the scene, the grouping, recall to my mind a wind-driven night when high tides are in at the Piazetta of St. Marc.

I sit by the iron stanchions of a floating jetty and look out across the dark, while the river slowly reveals its mystery. In its mid-stream there lies a great liner anchored for the night. Her dark bulk surges up out of the faint level of the water, and the smoke from her funnels floats back across the clouds. I can hear the roar of her steam-cranes and trace the sweep of their shadowy arms as they work ceaselessly through the long night, under the concentrated flame of a hundred electric arcs. The light is stark and dazzling when one is under it, and it blinds the eyes to all the surrounding world; but from these distant stanchions it is a flash only in the vastness of the dark. Faint waves stream from it over the river in zones of light; and across these, recalling old Viking similes of life, the dark shapes of sampans glide. I can trace for one instant the swift curve of the prow, the bent and shadowy form of the oarsman. A faint huddled figure suggests his fare. They pass like shadows on a screen, simulacra of sentient life. . . . One wonders idly, vainly, who they are.

As I look closer yet, new aspects of the river unfold before my vision. The dark I perceive is really ablaze

with a myriad lights; far up to the reaches of Kemendine, down away to the meeting of the waters by Puzun-Daung, and all across to the murky Dalla shore, the lights twinkle, a great host. Out of the distance come twin lights threading their way through the motionless crowd, and out of the gloom there grows a slight outline, and there comes a flash like the under-

THE SAMPAN IN ACTION

gleam of a shark, as a launch, with a quiet policeman seated within her, throbs past. Here all, or nearly all, is peace and silence; but down-stream the night wind bears the burden of the dock labourers' song, as they sweat and labour into the dawn under the flare of the furious Lubigen.

The great elemental forces work in silence, and the whole stupendous drama is accomplished almost invisibly.

But the mute trail of the liner's smoke tells of the changing wind, the swing of the anchored ships of the outgoing tide, and overhead, the stars as they pass one by one into darkness speak of yet greater mysteries.

At the jetty stairs, under the shadow of the iron bridge, the sampan-men wait for the chance passenger. I hail one and pass swiftly into mid-stream, where the liner, blazing with lights from prow to stern, flings her ribbons of flame across the water. Overhead, the young

SAMPANS IN FULL SAIL

moon now shines, at play with the drifting clouds. My boatman steers in her silver track up the river, and the scene that lies before me is one that Venice herself cannot surpass. The myriad lights on the water rival the twinkling firmament overhead; the river heaves with the billows of passing ships; great cargo boats spread their black sails against the sky and bear down

upon my frail craft like raiders of the night; *laung-zats*, long and low in the water, sweep down with stately sterns and the measured fall of oars, the bending forms of the rowers outlined against the gloom; the masts and rigging of sailing-ships trace

THE SAMPAN AT REST

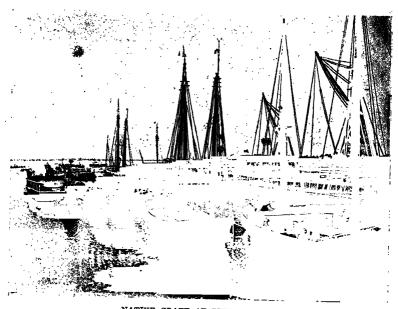
their old-world fretwork against the crescent of the moon; through all, my small bark speeds on her way, gliding now between the prows of her sister craft, now, with swift daring, circling the sterns and anchor chains of the iron ships. One slip, a second's hesitation, the snapping of an oar, would suffice to throw my boatman and me upon the mercy of the waters; and the waters of the Rangoon river know no mercy.

On the Dalla shore, where the steamers of the Old Flotilla lie in dock, the painters and the caulkers are at work, and their fires flame and quiver on the face of the river. And beyond, where creeks lead up into the heart of the Twanté plain, rice-mills groan and vibrate, and Chinese iron-smiths mould their red-hot cauldrons. Strange worlds these of midnight life, into which for the curious there is entry. I put my hand into the water, and feel the derelicts of the mills, the paddy-husks drifting in millions out to sea, and they run and circle up my arm, and I know them though

they are invisible to my eyes. The feel of the water is warm to my fingers; the air ambrosial and laden with the scent of the sea. Above the harbour lights and the mizzen-lanterns, strung high against the violet night, is a chaplet of flame, the diadem of the city. It is held aloft by the Shway Dagôn, invisible itself in the night.

CHAPTER VI

THE PUZUN-DAUNG CREEK

THE little river of this name, where it enters the Hlaing under the guns of Monkey Point is at

NATIVE CRAFT AT PUZUN-DAUNG

the heart of the rice trade of Rangoon, which runs into over two million tons a year. Its mouth during the rice season is crowded with the carved boats of

the peasantry, freighted with the harvest of three million acres; and here more energy and wealth are concentrated than in any other equal area in the city. Between January and May this back-water palpitates with life; and day after day and through the night the rice is husked here in the giant mills which stand upon its banks. Here launches rush up and down with frantic energy, cargo boats lie thick as flies upon the water,

THE PUZUN-DAUNG CREEK

and sampans sweep up in an unbroken stream. The passing of the rice season brings the creek some measure of repose, and of a misty evening at such times it has often recalled to me, from its character of isolation rather than from any similarity in detail, the Canale di San Pietro, as one comes upon it fresh from the Public Gardens. It is dominated at its far end by the superb beauty of the Shway Dagôn. The creek curves round the foot of the hill on which the golden

pagoda is built, and as one ascends it, the whole view gradually swings round. It is an engrossing transition from the pride of action, the modern pulsing of life, the symbols of wealth and civilisation that crowd the estuary of the stream, to the stark slime of the tide-uncovered banks, the loneliness and the primitiveness of the upper reaches; it is a swift passing from the twentieth to the first century. A thatched hamlet lifts its roofs above the plain; on the edge of the low water a fisherman toils at his nets; a canoe with two occupants goes by; a party of naked lads wallow in the slime of the foreshore, taking the mud baths to which the twentieth century is returning. Such are the symptoms of life along its upper courses; but loneliness is the character of the Puzun-Daung above the territory of the mills, and the land, washed and left soaking by the daily tide, seems scarcely yet to have emerged from its subaqueous infancy.

CHAPTER VII

THE SHWAY DAGÔN

"Take it all in all, it is the fabric in India of all that I have visited most worth seeing, the Taj alone excepted."—MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE.

OF the origin of the Shway Dagôn, I have already spoken in connection with the origin of Rangoon. The life that animates it to-day is of more interest, and it is true that if all else in Burma were destroyed and only the Shway Dagôn with its life were preserved, there would remain enough to tell the world of all that is best in the idiosyncrasy of the Burmese race. There is no other centre in Burma that can compare with it for the display of colour, for the physical pageantry and the spiritual expression of life, for the grand movement of many peoples on a stage as splendid as any in the world.

Rising to a height of three hundred and sixty-eight feet, it is loftier than St. Paul's, and its size is greatly enhanced by the fact that it stands on an eminence that is itself one hundred and sixty-six feet above the level of the city. This circumstance gives it an air of great dignity, and makes it conspicuous over a wide horizon. Its spire of gold, touched by the flaming sun,

THE SHWAY DAGÔN

is the first object upon which the eyes of the world-traveller rest as he approaches Rangoon, and it is the last of the city he looks upon when his steamer is bearing him away; and the memory of it never fades from the eyes of one who has once looked upon it.

It is covered with pure gold from base to summit; and once in every generation this gold is completely renewed by public subscription. Yet throughout the interval the process of regilding goes on perpetually. Pious people who seek in this way to express their veneration and to add to their store of spiritual merit, climb up daily with little fluttering packets of gold leaf, which they fasten on some fraction of its great surface; and there is no more picturesque sight offered by it than that of a group of these silken worshippers outlined high against its gold, in the act of contributing

their small quota to its splendour. It is in such episodes as these that the fundamental democracy of Eastern life is most happily revealed. For the East, and especially this East about which this book is written, is above all things tolerant. Time has taught it the faculty of leaving the individual alone. To live and to let live is its philosophy; and it is the keynote of the life that daily throngs the platform of the Shway Dagôn.

This platform, with a perimeter of nearly fourteen hundred feet, is the place of worship. *The pagoda itself has no interior.* It is a solid stupa of brick raised over a relic chamber. A cutting made into its centre has revealed the fact that the original pagoda had seven casings added to it, before it attained its present proportions. The shape of the pagoda is that of an elongated cone. It is divided by Burmese convention into twelve parts:[1] first, the base surrounded by a great number of small pagodas; then the three terraces, called Pichayas; next the Bell; the inverted Thabeik, or begging bowl; the Baungyit, or twisted turban; the Kyalan, or ornamental lotus flower; the Plantain Bud; the brass plate for the Hti, or umbrella; the Hti; the Sein bwin, or artificial flowers; the Vane; and last of all, the Seinbu, or bud of diamonds.

Of these the *hti* with its accessories is of exceptional interest. It was presented to the pagoda by

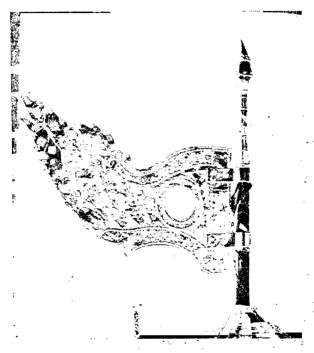
[1] For some of these particulars I am indebted to a little book on "The Pagoda," compiled by my old friend and chief, the late Thomas Hesketh Biggs, Comptroller of Burma, to whose memory I would pay this tribute.

Mindon Min, King of Burma, and its transmission from Mandalay to Rangoon was almost a political event. The placing of *htis* on the chief pagodas of the country has always been an expression of sovereignty in Burma, and few indeed of a more striking description can well be imagined. The king strove hard, therefore, to secure the consent of the British Government then established in Rangoon, to the placing of his gift by his own representatives upon the summit of the Shway Dagôn; but, for sound political reasons, without success. The gorgeous object, valued at £60,000, was

GOING UP TO THE PAGODA

brought down by a deputation of the Royal officers as far as the border, where it was taken over by a British subject. The king was thus gratified in his spiritual desire; his political yearning had to remain unappeased. The *hti*, which, to the eye of the spectator standing at the foot of the pagoda, seems but a very small object, is in reality a canopy of iron and gold thirteen and a half feet in diameter, and forty-seven feet in height. It is hung with nearly fifteen hundred bells, of which more than a hundred are of gold and the rest of solid silver. Large as many of these bells

COMING AWAY

are, they cannot be seen with the naked eye from the pagoda base; but their music can be heard in the night watches, when the wind blows amongst their silver and golden tongues. The vane and the *seinbu* are practically invisible. Certainly no gleam of their jewels[1] ever reaches

THE JEWELLED VANE

the human eye. And one cannot but recognise the nobility of sentiment which underlies this matter. In a like spirit, one sees placed at the climbing pinnacles of some grey cathedral in Europe the fine work of the artist

[1] 3,664 rubies, 541 emeralds, and 433 diamonds.

lavished on hidden gargoyles and saintly figures far out of reach of the thronging world below; and one admires the restraint, the humility, and the fine purpose. But it is only in Burma, so often accused of superficiality, that men put a great ransom in jewels where no eye can testify to their splendour.

The platform upon which the pagoda stands is approached by four great flights of stairs at the cardinal points. Of these the southern stairs are the most frequented, facing as they do the immemorial road which leads up from the banks of the river, straight through the heart of the town to the pagoda. The eastern and the northern stairs are used by the smaller communities of people who reside in their neighbourhood. The western stairs have been closed to worshippers at the pagoda since the irony of events converted it into a British fortress. Each of these stairs has an individuality of its own.

THE SOUTHERN APPROACH

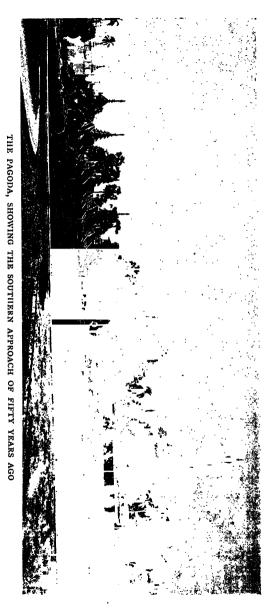
Here, the first steps on the roadside are flanked by a pair of colossal gryphons, at whose feet there are strange contrasts of lepers in the toils of death and children unconsciously at play. Beyond the gryphons there is a modern arch of masonry, which is unworthy of its place in the forefront of the great fane. Beyond it again, there reach away, in deep gloom, the first stairs of the covered passage to more open spaces where the light falls in golden bars upon

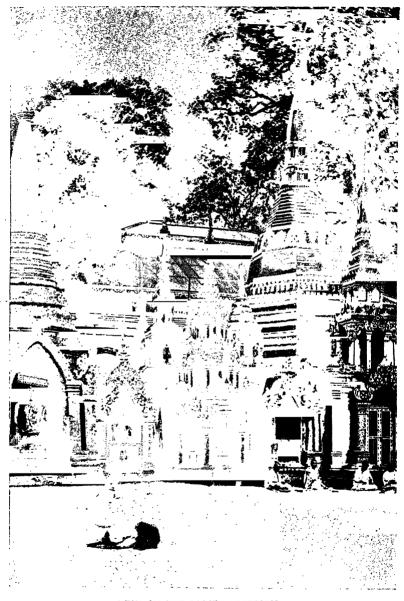
From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

YOUNG GIRLS AT THEIR DEVOTIONS.

THE SOUTHERN APPROACH TO-DAY

the silk of the ascending and descending worshippers. On both sides of the passage sit the vendors of gold leaf and waxen tapers for the pious, and coloured beads and mirrors for the vain, and books for the learned, and toys and supple-jacks for the young. Pretty women dart out from behind the gay stalls and twang their little triangular gongs in the faces of the passers-by, and children run to the stranger with offerings of flowers and re-

THE PAGODA, SHOWING THE SOUTHERN APPROACH OF FIFTY YEARS AGO

quests for pence. Here, in these half-lit corridors, is gathered a singular epitome of life. Women sit nursing their babes, girls throw amorous glances and quick words at the passing youth, nuns beg gently in the open spaces, and loud-voiced beggars call upon the charity of the world: "*Amado, Amaungdo. Thanahma sayaba myi khinbya; tabya lauk thanadaw moogai-gyaba khinbya*" ("Good Folk—Ladies, gentlemen, by your pity alone can I eat; a copper, a copper, I pray you").

Ascending still, one comes upon the first moat of the citadel, spanned by a drawbridge and defended by an iron gate, whose chains and loopholes are rusty from want of use. On the east, the long moat reaches away to the corner bastions; on the west, to the barred door of the arsenal guard-house. Here, in this gate made for purposes alien to the Buddhist faith, there is a mist of sunlight through which the figures of the ascending crowd pass into the shadow of the upper stairs. The outer porch is of grey wood and mosaic gold and dark intricate carving, and the Chinese letters testify to the race of the donor. The slant red sunlight streams in unexpected bars amongst the shadows of the stairs, falling here upon a woman's face, transfiguring it, there upon a mass of lambent gold on a white pillar; or it flames in the heart of the amber beads which fall in curtains before the stalls. And thus, climbing on up the stairs, polished by the bare feet of the worshipping millions, one comes with a swift transition upon the great court of the pagoda, and all that it has to show

NUNS ON THE PAGODA PLATFORM

of wonder and splendour and moving life. There is no spectacle in the world more fit to dazzle the eyes.

There is a quieter scene at the south-east corner, where, under the shelter of great trees, and remote from the world that throngs about the inner aisles,

THE OUTLOOK

there are wooden platforms built up to the level of the high containing wall. So skilfully is the place chosen, that one can visit the pagoda a dozen times without coming upon it. Here pilgrims rest; finding shelter from the noontide heat, a resting-place at night, and at all hours that there is light, from the first coming of the morning to the passing of the sun-

set beyond the Dalla plains, a view of surpassing interest and beauty. Tufted palms rise up here, dark and stately, in the forefront; the grass-covered bastions of the fort lie below; and beyond, reaching away to the horizon, spreads the fair site of the city of Rangoon. The Pegu river and the Hlaing meet there under the guns of Monkey Point and the loops of the smaller river reach away through the heart of the level plain to the misty land of the dawn. The spire of Syriam pierces the distant sky; the dark smoke-clouds of factories trail in the wake of the invisible winds. Where the Puzun-Daung creek opens out like an estuary into the wide space of waters, the pent roofs of the mills, and the masts of the cargo boats, cluster together, and in the sapphire mist there are traced in outline the lineaments of a great and populous city. Much nearer, and under the eastern slopes, the Royal lakes lie like a chance mirror, and every phase of the passing day is caught upon their surface.

Here, true to his instinct of piety, his love of the beautiful, the Burman pilgrim who has paid his devotions at the great shrine retires for silent meditation. Maybe it is an old man who sits here alone as the evening draws in, his eyes turned towards the world of palm-trees and distant rivers, of red roofs and the paling hues of the sunset; while a rosary moves in his fingers, responsive to the prayer falling from his lips, his face wrapt in an ecstasy of holiness. There is some quality in the Burman which lifts him up at such times, and in such places, to a great dignity. I

THE PILGRIM'S REST

can only suggest, in explanation, his absolute sincerity, the transparent humility of his piety, his unconsciousness of self and of the world, in his effort to reach the heart of the spiritual life; and his artistic instinct, never in his personal actions at fault.

A little way from this secluded corner of the pagoda, in a privacy still greater, there lie the graves of the Englishmen who fell in an assault on the shrine.

On the eastern face of the pagoda, there is another great flight of stairs that is often crowded with worshippers, but there are no stalls here, and for great portions of the day the silent corridors are wholly untenanted. Their loneliness was long enhanced by the presence of a single tenant, an old leper, nearly blind and in a terrible state of dissolution. He was a singular creature, who never asked an alms. Of nights he sat by the flame of a smoky lamp, whose wick flickered in every passing gust. But he has long since attained peace, and no successor has come to fill his place, or prolong his awful vigil. The stairs lead down through vermilion aisles to the outer moat and drawbridge, and beyond them by a paved causeway to Bahan, the village of the pagoda slaves. Here of an evening the faint blue smoke hangs in a cloud above the little houses; and of a morning on feast days the causeway in the sunlight is thronged with silken worshippers on their way from all the eastern country-side to the great shrine.

The northern entrance is quiet; yet even after the concentrated splendour of these two other approaches,

possibly on that account, there is in it a subtle attraction. Here the golden mass of the pagoda is seen in unbroken unity through an avenue of dark Palmyra palms. The steps that climb up to it are seldom trodden. Quiet is their charm; and on many a day when the heart is heavy and little able to face the pageantry of life—of the life that ever streams up the pathway from the white dragons to the southern *tazoungs*—one is glad to come up this way and rest in silence in the comforting beauty and stateliness of the great temple.

On the West there is nothing but a dead wall, the limit of arsenals and barracks.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PAGODA

I do not propose here to give any complete account of the architectural incidents of the pagoda. Not only is there a wealth of minute detail, the description of which would involve something like a dissertation on Buddhism and Burmese mythology; but there is the fact that the buildings at the base and on the platform of the pagoda are for ever changing. A description of the pagoda as it was ten years ago would be incomplete to-day. This is due as much to the ephemeral nature of the wooden buildings as to the progressive character of Burmese art. For Burmese art is essentially alive. It is charged with vitality, it is ever receptive of new ideas. The spirit of the people is buoyant and full of *élan*, and the rapidity with which new developments begin and advance towards fruition is amazing. Thus of late years a great advance has

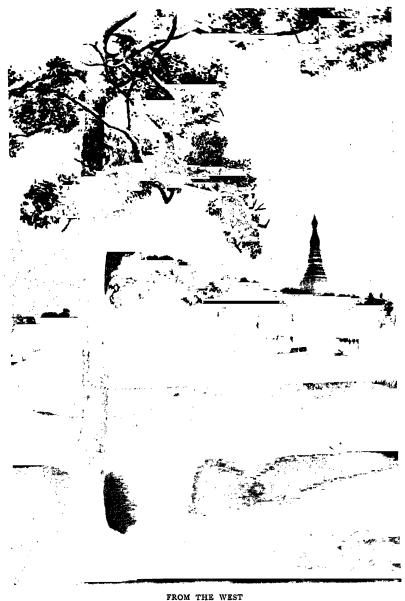
FROM THE FOOT OF THE EASTERN STAIRS TO THE PINNACLE OF THE PAGODA

been made in the art of glass mosaic, and where, a decade ago, a few pillars wrought into simple designs alone represented it, there are now scores of elegant columns, worked in the most daring colours into patterns of great beauty and intricacy. Unhappily the advance is not always in the right direction, and much that has been done of late years marks a falling away, both in simplicity and in taste. If the Burmese mind be, as I believe it to be, essentially alive, it is also prone to extravagance and excess, and this failing is nowhere so marked as it is in Burmese art. There is a fascination in the mere multiplication of things which it is unable to resist, and objects beautiful in themselves become an occasion of fatigue to the eye by their incessant repetition. One notable example of this is furnished in the base of the pagoda. Originally of a design remarkable for its antique simplicity and dignity, it has of late been almost entirely concealed by the accumulation of an enormous number of petty shrines. Some of these, indeed, are wrought with great delicacy and skill. Yet they serve no true purpose of art, since they are wholly unnecessary; and they are worse than unnecessary, since they obscure what was already beautiful and adapted to its purpose. To protests made by lovers of the great shrine, the invariable answer is that the new chapels will look very fine when they are finished. The trustees to whose care the building is committed urge, on the other hand, that it is not in accordance with Buddhist feeling that the right of any man to

earn spiritual merit, by adding something to the national pagoda, should be denied, and that the sum now paid for permission to erect one of these little shrines is a valuable addition to the resources of the pagoda.

As one walks round the face of the edifice one is struck by the variety of strange creatures that ornament it. Here there are sphinxes and leogryphs, which hark back in their origin to Nineveh; dragons with large eyeballs and pointed tongues; and elephants that kneel in attitudes of adoration. There are trees of gold with crystal fruit, begging bowls of glass mosaic, stone umbrellas of great antiquity, and altars upon which the floral offerings of the pious exhale strange perfumes into the air. Astronomical lore is manifested in the tall vermilion posts, inscribed in gold with the names and symbols of the sun, the moon, and the planets; and at intervals there are square tanks of masonry, into which the drainage of the pagoda charged with golden dust is borne. Hundreds of pounds' worth of gold are recovered from the residue of mire that remains in them each year when the waters have run off.

At each of the cardinal points, with their backs to the pagoda and their faces set towards the four approaches to the shrine, there stand, open to the visits of the devout, *tazoungs*, or chapels, with multiple tapering roofs, supported on lofty pillars of mosaic and gold. Within, there are seated images of the Buddha, some of them so charged with gold that all trace of features has been obliterated. Within the gloom of these chapels, countless tapers flicker, lighting up the marble,

FROM THE WEST

the brass, and the gold of which the images are made. Here the devotion of the pious culminates, and the voices of the worshippers vibrate in loud unison

SPHINX AT THE NORTH-EAST CORNER

through the golden aisles. Two of these *tazoungs* are the outcome of recent zeal, and if they lack the simple dignity of the earlier buildings, which they have displaced, they certainly surpass them in their lavish use

of gold. There is gold everywhere, from the pediment of the stately pillars to the topmost pinnacle of the ascending roofs. Each of them has cost the donors, prosperous brokers in the paddy trade, a sum of £10,000, and the details of the expenditure are recorded in golden letters upon marble stones which compel the attention of the visitor. The fancy of hiding his spiritual light under a bushel is unknown to the Burman Buddhist. The acquisition of merit—of the merit that helps souls to rise in the scale of perfection, which eventually floats the perfect into the infinite peace of Nirvana—is the laudable ambition of every earnest man and woman in Burma. It is the action that counts, and its efficacy is little affected by the manner in which it is performed. Moreover, the Burmese mind is too direct and simple to entertain the idea of ceremonial modesty on the one hand, or of hypocrisy on the other. All men when they have prayed at the pagoda and bestowed their alms, strike with a deer horn one of the great tongueless bells on the platform to rouse the attention of the Recording Angel.

The new *tazoungs* illustrate at once the vigour and the element of decline in Burmese art. Between the golden pillars there are screens of fine wood-carving most delicately and skilfully wrought. The artist has not followed any model but his own fancy. He has had the courage to break away from the traditional boldness of design and execution which characterise the national carving; but his efforts, great in them-

CHAPELS IN GLASS MOSAIC

selves, have led him into a style of work that is too delicate for open-air effect, for which this carving is pre-eminently intended. If Burmese carving proceeds

"TAZOUNG," ON THE OUTER CIRCLE

too far along this line it can only end in extinguishing itself.

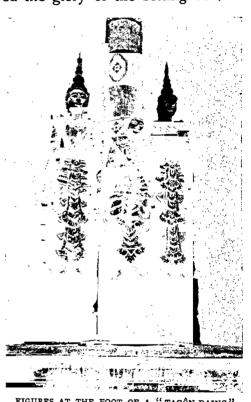
The colouring of these buildings is superb. Outside they are vermilion and gold—within they are

green and gold and purple. They are carved to their summits and laden with numberless figures, each of which is alive with action.

Between these *tazoungs*, fixed at one end in the mass of the pagoda itself, and a vast outer circle of lesser pagodas and shrines, there is an open space, narrowing unhappily every year, which is flagged with rich flesh-coloured stone. It is upon these stones that the worshippers kneel in paying their devotions. Of the outer group of buildings there are many of great interest and charm; amongst them stand the *htis* of a bygone day, and upon the edge of the platform the *tagôn-daings*, which are perhaps the most graceful objects ever invented by Burmese art. Their lofty columns, inlaid with rich mosaic, are supported at the foot by striking figures of *nats*, and they are surmounted at their summits by effigies of the *galon* bird and the sacred Hansa of Pegu. Streamers of coloured gauze flutter from them, upheld by the passing winds.

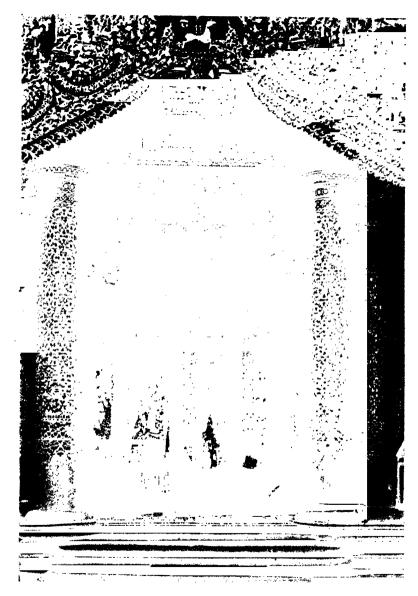
Of such is the architecture of the pagoda. Great as it is, it is surpassed in interest by the life that animates it. Year after year for more than ten years, I, who write this, have visited the Shway Dagôn Pagoda. Upon countless occasions I have climbed up its dark stairs; I have walked in wonder and delight upon its platform; I have mingled with its silken throngs; I have seen the men and the women and the little children at prayer; I have looked upon the great drama of worship as it has unfolded itself before my

ON THE WEST PLATFORM

eyes. I have walked there in the first freshness of the dawn, in the company of its earliest visitors; I have spent the noontide in the shelter of its great trees; I have followed the glory of the setting sun, as it has thrown its magic upon all that is splendid in the great shrine; I have walked alone in the company of the night, and heard the music of its clear-voiced bells tinkling far over-head in the passing breeze; and I have seen the dawn come upon it again, and moon-light and sunlight for one supreme moment compete upon its golden face. I have gone to it in all times of joy and sorrow, and in every mood, for I have found it comforting and beautiful, and I suppose that I can claim to know it and to love it as well as any one in the world; yet, when I come to describe it, its fascination, its beauty, the life that moves upon it,

FIGURES AT THE FOOT OF A "TAGÔN-DAING"

the emotion it embodies, I realise that I am undertaking a task that is beyond my power of performance. Many who live within the sweep of its shadow, but seldom visit it, will not understand my estimate of it; for the truth is that the Shway Dagôn Pagoda has never yet been sufficiently appraised. This much may at least be said of it; it is the greatest cathedral of the Buddhist faith; it can be compared only with the great shrines of the earth. And if in many obvious respects they surpass it, in one it surpasses them all; for every one of them, with all its beauty, is covered in some form with a roof, whereas in the Shway Dagôn there is architecture which has learnt how to make of its dome a dazzling firmament. That is the great fact about this pagoda, which it takes some time to find out. Once it is realised, the whole mighty fabric falls into its true perspective. It is no longer the main edifice, a mass of dead brickwork; but the great shaft of a temple of which the blue sky and the stars by night are the vaulted roof. Let the reader when he goes there remember this, and he will find his delight, his admiration, his understanding of the great fane much enhanced.

THE PAGODA ON A FEAST DAY

To the occasional visitor there must always seem a plenitude of worshippers at the pagoda; but in truth its life ebbs and flows from day to day and season to season. It reaches its height at the full moon of

THE NEW "TAZOUNG"

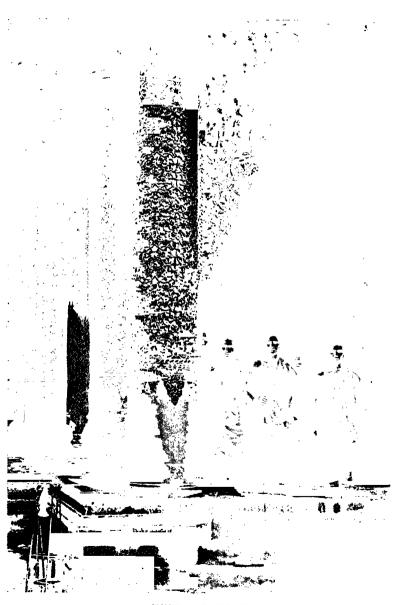
Taboung, when pilgrims drawn from the farthest corners of South-eastern Asia assemble on it for the great annual festival. From the confines of China; from the

STONE UMBRELLAS, ELEPHANTS, AND FIGURES

highland principalities of the Shan; from the fastnesses of the Karen, though in numbers diminishing each year with the spread of Christianity amongst them; from Bangkok and Annan, the people come to pay their devotions at the Shway Dagôn. But pre-eminently

they come from the land itself in which the pagoda stands, and it is as a Burmese spectacle that the feast demands the notice of the world.

Lanterns making a circle of fire against the night are hung upon its circumference a hundred feet above the base of the pagoda. A million waxen tapers flame before the effigies of the Buddha, and upon the purple and the gold and the mosaic and the carved wood. The clang of bells, the refrain of the worshipping populace, the silken tread of unnumbered feet upon the polished stones, daze the ear with their multitudinous music. Vast as is the platform of the pagoda, there is at times scarcely room to move upon it for the press of pilgrims. White muslins and delicate silks, and flaming turbans, bangles of red gold, and pyramids of diamonds, and flowers placed in the uncovered coils of the women; monks in swaying yellow robes, Shans in flapping hats and wide trousers, pig-tailed Chinamen, and peasants clad in the rough homespun of the jungle, make up the varied scene.

Before the dawn, "When the red star appears," the worshippers rise and prepare their offerings of fruit and flowers and sweetmeats, and one by one they converge upon the temple. A few, still earlier in their devotions, climb while it is yet dark, with the aid of lanterns, up the dark polished stairs. The morning finds a great company assembled. Here and there men pray in companies, representing some religious association; parties of villagers frightened by tales of town dangers keep together; but for the most part

MONKS AND MOSAICS

the worship is individual. The worshipper kneeling before the pagoda lights the tapers he has brought, and holding his offering of flowers in his joined hands, prays, repeating in adoration the excellencies of the Buddha. Strange prayers, as to a being who hears and can help, for the things that are dear to men, go up from these unbelievers in a personal god. The man and his wife kneeling together pray that they may see the Buddha Arimaddeya when he comes again as the saviour of mankind; and that thus they may attain *neikban.* Till then they beg that they may live again as husband and wife. Others solicit with great earnestness at the feet of Thakiamuni the favour of becoming at some time a Buddha, like himself, and wish, like King Laukatara, "that they may be born in the same country of the same parents; that they may ride the same horses, and be attended by the same companions" as of old. Lovers come here and

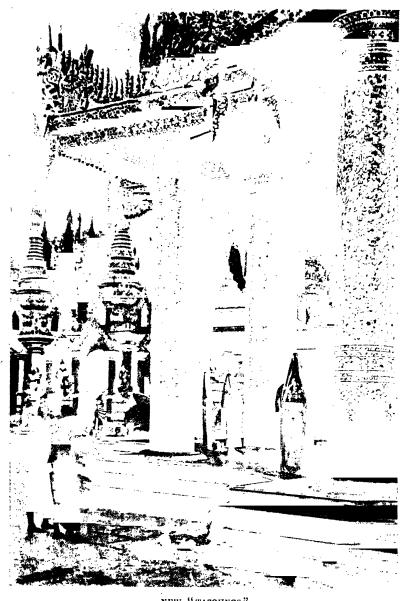
THE BASE OF A "TAGÔN-DAING"

pray that their love may continue, and that if fate should separate them, it may survive into a future existence; that it may last for ever till *neikban* is attained. Aged men and young women, mothers, and children scarce able to lisp, all unite in the one great universal prayer: "May we attain by the merit of the three precious things—the Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly—to *neikban*!

And this *neikban*—what is it? Eternal extinction or eternal and conscious peace? The everyday Buddhist in Burma, at least, is in no doubt upon the subject; and for the rest, for an exalted idea of Paradise, I do not remember to have come upon anything finer than this: "Where the believer expects to find a sure shelter against all errors, doubts, and fears; and a resting-place, where his spirit may securely enjoy the undisturbed possession of truth."

A visit to the Shway Dagôn Pagoda at the time of the annual feast is the goal of the pious Burman's ambition. The popular refrain at the festival sung by all classes, and by people of all ages, runs thus:

> Ahpogyi-o Kongon, matheba hnin-on;
> Naung hnitkha tuzaung bon pwe kyizo on.

("O old man, do not die yet; live to see next year's tuzaung bon pwe.") And old people full of gratitude at having seen it go to and fro in an ecstasy, chanting their "Nunc Dimittis": "Lo, if I die now, I care not, for I have lived to look upon the great 'Phaya.'"

NEW "TAZOUNGS"

Yet devout as are the assembled people, profound as is their reverence for the shrine, it is not for purposes of worship alone that they come together here. The Burmese are a catholic people, with an instinctive appreciation of the good things of life. They extend their patronage as liberally to the white man's shops as they do to their own, and country visitors by their un-

OPEN-AIR PLAY

affected admiration and artless mistakes provide much delight to the town-bred citizen. They stand before the big windows of the English drapers and indulge in wonder at the fine things it contains. "A-mai-lai, what a paradise!" At the Italian confectioner's—"He, Ko Saw. This is *nat awza*, the food of the gods. Nothing like this in the jungle." Familiar *contretemps* occur, such as an intemperate assault on the mustard

pot; and old ladies, who should know better, nearly choke themselves by too rapid a consumption of *glace à la vanille.* And if Rangoon, to the annual pilgrim, bulks in this way as a kind of material paradise, it is also associated in his mind with dangers he must guard against; such as the trite Shway-lain, the Shan-lain, and the Pyanpay. The Pyanpay involves the temporary abduction of a child or of one of the waggon bullocks, and the payment of a price by the distracted owner for its recovery. Young ladies who have come to worship at the pagoda, remind themselves that Rangoon is a wicked city, and the knowledge that some dashing young fellow may carry them off in a fast cab adds a thrill of excitement to their simple pleasures. Every smart young fellow who throws an eye at a pretty girl looms up in her timid imagination as the abductor of tradition.

Yet these are but episodes. The great body of the pilgrims moves through the ceremony of devotion and pleasure with little anxiety or mishap. Perhaps the greatest pleasure of all is found in the plays that are performed in the thoroughfares of the town, and on the outer slopes of the pagoda, where there is room for a vast encampment. The play, which is performed in the open, under the starry sky, is nearly always a tale of kings and queens and princes and princesses, to which the people listen with an interest as great and unabated as that of a child listening for the hundredth time to the same old fairy tale. These royalties who move upon the Burmese stage are very real people to the Burmese

From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

COMING DOWN FROM THE PAGODA AFTER WORSHIP.

imagination, and their lofty ways and sad fortunes wring many a heart. Yet there is always a new element in the play imported by the topical allusions and jokes, the material for which is collected by the actors by listening with attention to the *voces populi* and noting the misadventures of the day. Jokes of this kind are received with exuberant delight by the assembled people. The plays near the pagoda are organised and paid for by the trustees; many of those in the town by notabilities of a generous habit. The audience assembles without invitation.

FIGURE OF GAUTAMA

Thus, one by one, the days of the great festival are accomplished; the ox-waggons in which the nearest multitude has come are harnessed again, and the clanging bells of the cattle, the merriment of the occupants, prolong the festivity far into the countryside. Steamers and trains now bear away more distant dwellers. Yet even now many a pilgrim walks a month's journey to his home.

The festival passes; but the life remains. Every day has its harmony of colour, its passion of praise and worship, its unending change. Every day that one goes to the pagoda it has something new to offer, and

only the stranger comes quickly to the end of its mystery.

There is such melody there, the music of a thousand chimes, and great variety of beauty. In the west its tall palms outlined against the red sunset awaken memories of the desert; below, the city of Rangoon looks like a fleet of ships at sea, its mizzen lights high above the dusk water; the great *pipul* with its shrines —the *ficus religiosa*—carries with it a suggestion of oldest India. As the sun sets behind the Dalla plains the long shadow of the pagoda falls with an increasing reach upon the world, and the gold on its swelling curves flames into startling beauty, and every inch of gorgeous mosaic has its moment of supremacy. The tapers on the altars grow into life as the darkness comes, the stars overhead break out in dazzling galaxies against the violet night, and the loud voices of the evening worshippers peal and vibrate through the pillared spaces. The white dragons and elephants at the foot of the pagoda become of an insistent supernatural whiteness; the mystery of night descends upon all that moves or flames upon its surface. Cressets of flame on the backs of the kneeling beasts rescue patches from the general obscurity, as they flash on red and gold dragons, on the mirrored interiors of chapels, on the new delicate foliage of the overspreading trees, and throw long shadows from the kneeling women at prayer. A small child walks about before the rows of tapers at the feet of the polished gleaming Buddhas; a girl prattles on a mat of her little secular joys; a sad woman sits alone

at a late flower stall; a little old man kneels in a remote corner at prayer; a devout society in a neighbouring *tazoung* chant their litanies together; men go to and fro with flowers in their clasped hands, *shekoing* before each shrine, and repeating their praises of the Three Precious Things; monks, a long way off, murmur their prayers in attitudes of reverent humility. A handsome girl, alone at the pagoda at this late hour, prays with a strange earnestness and sadness for one so young. She has come here to pray for her father, a trustee of the pagoda, who is ill and like to die. Many sad people come for solace to the great shrine.

FIGURE OF GAUTAMA

But even these leave, and the late moon, as she rises over the feathery masses of the trees, throwing her silver over the golden bulk of the pagoda, finds its courts untenanted. This is its hour of greatest

WOOD CARVING

mystery; the supreme period in the daily life of the great fne. The people have gone, but their tapers still flicker in lonely recesses, where shelter from the winds prolongs their hour; flowers exhale their perfume and glint in the pale moonlight; blood-red hibiscus and orange canna, pink and white roses, yellow-hearted *tayouksaga*; the idle wind, as she passes, rustles the broad leaves of the palms and makes a shimmer on the white gold-edged umbrellas. *Tagondaing* banners float with listless grace, and the tremulous *pipul* throws her young leaves, like a shower of fire-flies, against the sky. The palms are cut in silver. Overhead, stray wisps of cloud hide for a passing moment the glory of Orion. The melody of bells peals out from far and near as the wind freshens, and, underlying their tinkling music, there comes to the ear of the careful listener the deep vibration of the whole mass of the building, like the refrain of some distant elemental organ. Is there any cathedral in the world like this, so happy in its site, so splendid with its gold, so open to the universal life?

Book III

THE NORTHERN IRRAWADDY

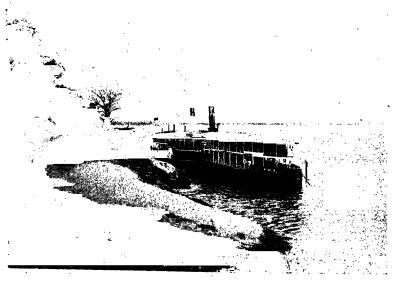
The Defiles—Bhamo—The Road to China

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEFILES

THE Irrawaddy is of all the great rivers of Indo-China the greatest. Through Burma it flows for a thousand miles, in a broad navigable stream, from the "confluence" in the far north, where, emerging from its still mysterious birthplace, it unites with its first great tributary, to the measureless sea into which it pours through a hundred mouths. The mountains in which it is born, an offshoot of the Himalaya, follow its destiny seaward, and when they sweep down to its water's edge, or tower mistily on its wide horizon, lend it its incommunicable charm and beauty. Lessening gradually from altitudes of eternal snow, they sink with the river into the ocean, their last bluff crowned by the golden pagoda of Moodain, "Gleaming far to seaward, a Burmese Sunium."

It is no light undertaking to describe this majestic creature. Its length and volume, its importance as an artery of the world, its rise and fall—these are easily recorded facts. The beauty of its waters that mirror a sky of varied loveliness, of its hills and forests and precipitous heights, of its vast spaces that bring a calm to the most fretful spirit, of the sunsets that wrap

it in mysteries of colour—these are things for which words are greatly inadequate. A great painter might attempt the picture; but he would do so with the knowledge that he must leave it incomplete, for he could paint only a phase of that which is infinite in its variety. He could tell but little of the human interest

AT ANCHOR

with which it is fraught; of the long historic procession that fills the mind's eye, the migration of prehistoric races, the movement of peoples under the impulse of immutable laws, the advance of invading armies, the flight and agony of the vanquished, the triumph of exultant victors; of kings and nobles and warriors; of saints and ascetics; of the life of the common people, with its passing joys and

IN THE NORTHERN REACHES

sorrows, in all of which the silent immortal river has played its continuous part. One cannot entrap the glory of that which lives and moves, and is yet in its entity and suggestiveness eternal.

The peoples of Burma came from the Highlands to the north of their present home many centuries ago, at a time of which no memory is preserved in local legend or tradition; though nature, less forgetful, has written upon each man's face the evidence of his origin. Following the streams which rise in that elevated country, they gradually spread southward, reaching, in the fulness of time, the sea. In primitive ages, when the clan or tribe was the only political unit, and there was no more obvious line of separation than the watershed between the streams that they encountered in their southern migration, it was natural that each tribe should separate itself from the rest. It was a separation, however, which, while it secured to each tribe its immediate liberty, carried in it the germ of ultimate reunion; and read in the light of this physical fact, the racial history of Burma becomes clear in its wide outline. The dominant Burmese represent the tribes that wandered down the tributary sources of the Upper Irrawaddy finally to coalesce in the valley of the great river. Their kindred with a lesser heritage are found in the many tribes on their borders. The Mun or Talaing, the people of the south, were amongst the first of those who came. The Burmese drove them before them, as they would probably have been driven themselves in time by the newer Kachin. But the Kachin has recoiled before

the might of England, and the tide is now setting back to the first home of all these peoples.

The Irrawaddy then, as it flows oceanward, ever accompanied by its hills, is symbolic in a profound sense of the history of the land. On its banks these rude Mongol wanderers grew up to civilisation under the influence of Hindu exiles from India; a civilisation to which the ruins of ancient cities bear testimony to this day. About its northern reaches, there was fought out the long battle of Burmese supremacy over the rival Shan race; a struggle of many centuries and varying fortunes, in which the prize was the great river itself. Shan kingdoms once powerful in the north, and as early as the first century of the Christian era in political relation with China, fell in the struggle, and save in tattered chronicles of small value, their memory has gone out from among their people. Down the valley of the Irrawaddy, too, there swept the all-but-engulfing tide of the Chinese invasions, in one of the earliest of which there perished PAGAN, the greatest of all Burmese capitals. And it has been up the Irrawaddy, from the sea, reversing, as in India, the immemorial tradition of conquest, that the British power has advanced. The great conflict between East and West, more universal now than at any previous period in the history of the world, has once more been fought out along its banks. The people of Burma have become a subject people; its kings have passed for ever out of the category of sovereign princes. Once more the West has triumphed; and to the satisfaction of the West. Yet no satisfaction can divest such

IN THE DEFILES

changes of their tragic character. The most callous cannot regard the fall of a nation without some sorrow, or the final extinction of a picturesque Court and of ancient institutions without regret. "Burma," in the words of the royal chronicler of China, "Burma, from the Han dynasty until our day, has existed for over seventeen hundred years, and now alas! by reason of a few years of tyranny and indiscretion on the part of its monarch, the country has been obliterated in the twinkling of an eye."

KACHIN WOMEN

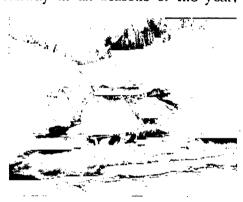
Not the least of its many fascinations is the mystery which shrouds the river's birthplace. Soon after entering Burma it presents the appearance of a pellucid stream eight hundred yards in width. That is the farthest knowledge of it possessed by the ordinary traveller. The men who live up there, the Englishmen who rule and fight in the wild border country, know it a little farther, as far up as and beyond the confluence, where the N'Maikha and N'Mlekha, its two main sources, unite. Beyond this point the Irrawaddy is unnavigable, and it has not yet been given to any man to say whence it

KACHIN

comes. The secret of its birth is still wrapped in the wilderness of mountains which spreads away beyond the confluence to the north and west. Yet it is being slowly wrested from its keepers. One by one the conjectures hazarded by investigators since the dawn of the nineteenth century have been disposed of; one by one the wild frontier tribes are being reduced to subjection, as the growing peace of Burma frees the Government for exploration and extension towards the north. It cannot be long now before its mystery is pierced.

Thirty miles below the confluence the new settlement of Myitkina is laid out on the high right bank of the river. No change can be more significant than the change which the last few years have wrought in the character of Myitkina. A dozen years ago it was the *ultima thule* of Burma, a military outpost in the heart of the enemy's country. For six months each year it was cut off from nearly all communication. The only approach to it lay by the river, and the river is no

A SHAN PRINCESS

highway at that season. The outpost of Myitkina had to look out for itself, feed itself, and fight upon occasion for its life. One winter it was attacked and burnt down by the caterans of the hills over the heads of its garrison of a thousand men. Myitkina is still the frontier town, it is still liable to have to fight for its life; but it is no longer cut off from succour. It is easily reached by railway at all seasons of the year, and it is becoming a popular stopping-place for the tourist hurrying round the globe. It has all the freshness and charm of a new settlement, and though on the borders of savagery, it is full of life, and action, and hope.

EARLY TRIBUTARIES

From Myitkina to near its junction with the Mogaung, the river flows in a broad, clear stream over a pebbled bed. Steaming down-stream in the last days of December, one can see the coarse sand churned up from amid the pebbles by the eddying current, and glistening like gold in the sunlit waters. The simile is not altogether fanciful, for the gold-washers are at work on the river slopes below Myitkina. Nearer the shallows which the steamers skirt in their course, distinct glimpses can be had into the life of the river; and great fish may be seen scuttling away

in agitation. The river, though broad and majestic to the eye, is comparatively shallow in its northern reaches, and the navigable channel is narrow. This is made obvious when a bank of yellow pebbles tilts its back half-way across the stream, or a reef of grey rocks stretches in sawlike outline across the ship's

SMALL CRAFT

course, narrowing the channel to a stream of deep water under the shelter of the opposite bank. Behind Myitkina, now fading into the blue distance, there tower up like "Breasts of Sheba" the twin peaks of Loi Lem and Loi Law, and behind these, again, there fade away into the empyrean the unexplored mountains of the north, upon which there is a gleam of snow.

It is one of the most beautiful and most satisfying voyages in the world, this swift descent down the upper waters of the Irrawaddy. The keen ozone of a perfect air, the broad winter sunlight flooding a landscape of romantic beauty, the sense of encompassing infinity, fill the blood with a supreme vitality, and lift the soul into regions of exquisite peace. The great river, free for the present to go where it lists, flows on in serene untroubled beauty, the central chord in a grand harmony of nature. Overhead there is a flawless sky, and on every hand the mountains stretch away to the uttermost horizon in shades of colour; from tints so faint that they are scarcely to be known from the ether beyond, to the rich purples of near peaks, and the deep blue greens of heavily wooded spurs which reach down to the water's edge, laving their uncovered foundations in the stream. At points like these in its course, where the dense shadows fall on the seemingly motionless waters, the river presents its most characteristic and beautiful aspects, resembling some still mountain lake, and recalling memories of far-off Como and Lucerne.

Sixty-five miles below Myitkina, the Mogaung, emerging from between low flat banks, clothed in giant grass, pours its tributary waters into the Irrawaddy. It flows through a district fruitful in serpentine and amber and indiarubber, inhabited by a medley of hill tribes of kindred origin, whose truculence and savagery long prevented its being opened up. The town of Mogaung has earned an unenviable notoriety as a penal settle-

ment. Banishment to Mogaung was almost the greatest misfortune that could overtake a Burman official in disgrace under the old *régime*. Near it is the Indaugyi Lake, from which the Mogaung derives a portion of its waters, and a legend of the country tells the old tale of an ancient city at its bottom, suddenly engulfed. Soon after the union of the Mogaung and the Irrawaddy a new range comes prominently into view, broadening out into a beautiful amphitheatre of blue hills, at the feet of which the united stream must seemingly come to eternal pause. But the river makes a grand south-westerly sweep, and there presently becomes visible, in the vicinity of the Shan-Talok village of Senbo, the great gorge through which it must pass, known in the nomenclature of the river as

THE FIRST DEFILE

Here, in the shadow of the hills, spreads a vast receiving-basin, in which its waters must perforce stay their course, since the narrow and circuitous defile is all too small for the broad stream demanding imperious admission. At this, the winter season, the river threads its way far down amid the sands which in

WINTER CALM IN THE FIRST DEFILE

IN THE FIRST DEFILE

flood-time form the bottom of an immense lake. There can, indeed, be few more magnificent episodes in the life of a river than this. For when, swollen with melting snow and heavy rain, it rushes turbulently seaward in obedience to the first law of its being, it is here suddenly checked in its course by the iron hand of the mountains. Signs of its terrible recoil are evident on every side. The spectator standing under the barbed frieze of the military outpost near Senbo, and looking down, first on the now quiet river, and then across a yawning interval to the opposite heights, realises something of its greater life. Far above the present limit of its waters, to a height of eighty feet, marking the woods with an even line in testimony to its domination, the river climbs in its session of wrath. In a single night it rises fifty feet, as though it sought to sweep the mountains before it, and at such times the defile within is a raging inferno of waters in which no boat can live.

For thirty-five miles the river flows through the mountains of the First Defile, whose rocky sides, torn and lacerated, lie bare in winter, the embodiment of savagery. This is more especially the case at one point, the most dangerous in the entire defile, where the black rocks rise sheer out of the river's bed, threatening destruction. Through them there has been cut a passage, now high above water-level, for the slow country boats, which formerly performed the perilous duty of carrying the mails in the flood season. From May to October the defile is entirely closed to steamers,

and even for country boats the service is one of some danger. The journey up-stream is then sometimes of three weeks' duration; the descent is a matter of six hours, so fierce is the current. A traveller who made both journeys at a comparatively quiet season has left of the journey up-stream the following account:

AT SENBO: THE RIVER MEASURE

"The scenery throughout this defile is sublimely grand and picturesque, but in places awful to contemplate as one stands watching the trackers, encouraging one another by fiendish yells that echo through the woods and straining every muscle to gain ground as the boat sluggishly quivers through the fierce rapids now running flush with the boat's gunwale. All now depends on

the trueness of the towing-line: that gone and we are lost, for the best and strongest swimmer could not live in such places." Returning in March, three months later, the journey was even more fruitful in excitement: "The danger of the defile had in no way been exaggerated. Indeed, as we shot down the impetuous stream, every moment seemed to be our last. It was with difficulty the helmsmen kept the boats from being carried round by the violent eddies and whirlpools, and the boatmen rowed their strongest against stream to reduce the terrific pace at which we were being borne by the fierce rapids. Our position was too critical to admit of accurate observation."

These are fearful joys to which the present-day traveller is not subjected; yet, for the seeker after it, the swift delirium of a race down the river in its turbulent season is an attainable joy any time between May and October. The river, restricted in this portion of its course to a narrow rocky channel, assumes again, though in a less transparent degree, the pure green tint which characterises it at Myitkina. On each hand the nobly wooded hills run down in *échelon* to the river's edge, and there is at all times that play of colour characteristic of hills piled behind one another in receding distances.

At frequent intervals the hills send down their tribute to the river in streamlets that babble over great polished boulders and gleam and sparkle in the sunlight. This is their season of security and charm. In the rain season their music swells to a deafening roar as

they rush down in cataracts, bringing with them, in helpless chaos, boulders and trees and sand. Near the lower end of the defile the river, winding a narrow and sinuous course through the rocks known as the Elephant, Cow, and Granary, enters on one of its most exquisite passages. The rocks, fancifully so named, stretch across in a broken line from shore to shore. For half the year they are covered, but in winter they lie exposed, glistening in the sun, and revealing the true width of the channel, here scarcely more than eighty yards across, but of immeasurable depth. Their sheer bare sides, of a polished grey-green hue, afford no footing for life; but on their rugged summits the receding river leaves a thin deposit of rich silt, in which tussocks of vivid grass find a home, their lively beauty enhanced by their grim setting. In the days soon after the war, when the channel was less known, a small steamer came to a violent end amid these dangerous reefs, which, in the flawless calm of a winter afternoon, present an aspect of placid beauty.

Below the Elephant and Cow the little hamlet of Tamangyi shows out from the leafy hillside, and the river, freed from its iron fetters, lengthens out into a long dreamy reach, in which the varied hills and woods and the opalescent clouds, that trail like the pinions of another world overhead, attain redoubled beauty. A moment, and the dream sweeps by; the great curtain of the hills folds swiftly back, revealing a distant glimpse of the Shan mountains; and the waters, sparkling in the broad sunlight, seem visibly to rejoice at the

termination of their long and arduous passage through the territories of the First Defile.

THE ELEPHANT

Few signs of life greet the traveller between Senbo and Tamangyi. An occasional boat or dugout, a thatched hut high up on the steep declivities, at the lower end some blue-coated Chinese Shan quarrying for stone, a rare pagoda; such are the faint symptoms of man's dominion. For the rest, a startled otter on the rocks; a white-headed fish-eagle with keen gaze intent on his prey; a cormorant, poised on a stake, and drying his dripping wings with obtrusive philosophy; a panther swimming hurriedly for life across the fast-flowing river; the short, quick call of barking deer, or the sullen roar of a tiger making off up one of the leafy watercourses. All else is loneliness and solitude.

Leaving the hills, the river spreads out to ambitious dimensions, and flowing past the site of ancient Sampenago, receives before it reaches Bhamo the tributary waters of the Taping.

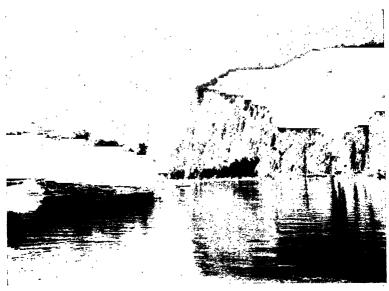
THE SECOND DEFILE

A few miles below Bhamo, the Irrawaddy, leaving behind it a great mass of mountains, the loftiest peaks

of which are the possession of China, glides into the gorge known as the Second Defile. There are no signs here of a vast accumulation of waters similar to that at the mouth of the defile above. The channel, broader and less obstructed, offers a more adequate highway, and the river is less turbulent in its entry. Yet on all sides there is grim testimony to its power in the pedestals of the surrounding hills, torn, contorted into the most fantastic patterns, and swept bare of every vestige of life to a height of thirty feet. It is this sense of conflict between vast elemental forces which, felt intensely here, makes the Second Defile a great spectacle of the world. Near the northern entrance a mighty cliff, which turns its worn face to the river, speaks with eloquence of the conflict. It rises sheer into the sky from the water's edge, eight hundred feet from its massive foundations, made smooth by the constant friction of the speeding river, to the delicate clustering bamboos on its summit. Round its base graceful creepers climb, and hang in festoons amid the branches of noble trees. A pagoda in miniature, one of the smallest of the myriads which taper heavenward in this land of religion, crowns the top of a small rock at its feet. Its diminutive size throws into relief the great rock, seared with the stress of centuries, which towers majestically above it. An instinctive hush settles down on the ship as we race under its shadow, and there is deep silence in the gorge, broken only by the steady paddle-throbs, which echo through it like mysterious heart-beats. In this

FISHING RAFT AND NETS IN THE SECOND DEFILE

battle-chamber of nature, stamped with the records of a long unceasing strife, the soul of the spectator shrinks into itself, finding no vent in the commonplace.

There is a legend attached to the great rock that is not unworthy of its tragic grandeur and beauty. It is a tale of the first king and queen of Sampenago,

GREAT CLIFF IN THE SECOND DEFILE

who were driven in a far-away day from their kingdom by Kuttha, the king's brother. The king, with true Buddhist philosophy, when he heard of his brother's advance, forbade any resistance. To take life would be wrong and the issue must turn on the extent of his accumulated merit through all past existences. If this were great, the threatened evil could not befall him; were it small, it could not be averted. So while

the king turned to prayer and good works, his princes and generals stayed their measures for defence, until the usurper swept in on the tide of destiny and seized the kingdom. The king fled, but was pursued, overtaken, and cast into prison. The queen escaped to the enchanted mountain Wela, where a son was born to her in her sorrow.

When the little Prince Welatha ("son of Wela") was six years old, he saw his mother in tears, and by questioning her learned that he was a prince and his father a captive. When he was seven, his mother yielded to his importunity and sent him with her royal ornaments to visit his father. On approaching Sampenago he met his father being led out to execution. The brave boy stopped the procession and revealed himself, offering to die instead of his father. The king Kuttha thereupon ordered him to be thrown into the Irrawaddy. *But the river rose in tremendous waves, the earth shook*, and the executioners could not for terror obey the royal order. This being reported to Kuttha, he ordered that the prince should be trodden to death by wild elephants; but the beasts could not be goaded to attack him. A deep pit was then dug and filled with burning fuel, into which the prince was cast; but the flames came on him like cool water, and the burning faggots became lilies. When Kuttha heard this, he grew furious in his rage, and had the young prince taken down to the spirit-haunted mountain and cast from the great precipice into the river; but he was caught up by a Naga and carried away to the Naga country.

WRECK OF THE KING OF BURMA'S STEAMER IN THE SECOND DEFILE

The earth quaked, many thunderbolts fell, the Irrawaddy rolled up its waves and broke down its banks. Kuttha was seized with terror, and, as he fled forth from the city gate, the earth opened and swallowed him up.

It is not the least interesting feature of many legends in Burma that they enshrine the traditional knowledge of some ancient historical or natural fact, and I believe that in this pretty tale we have the record of some great convulsion, an episode of more than usual moment in the ceaseless conflict between the great river and its encompassing hills.

AT SHWEGÚ FAIR

This, the place of the Great Cliff, is the finest portion of the Second Defile. Soon after leaving it, the river sweeps round in more than a semicircle, to emerge once more in untrammelled splendour at the foot of a rounded hill tinted with reddening grass and not unlike an English down.

Below the defile lie the island and village of Shwegú, through the tree-tops of which gleam the golden spires of many pagodas, the centre of a great annual festival attended by many thousands of pilgrims. An island of green and gold, set in the folds of a sunlit river fading away to steel-blue mist at the threshold of the

mountains, on the summits of which an army of opal clouds is enthroned, Shwegú is thrice lovely.

Henceforth, till it reaches the Third Defile, the river's course is uneventful, save where, encircling many islands, it receives from China the many-mouthed homage of the Shweli. Yet it never ceases to be beautiful. At evening the sun sinks behind the clear-

AT SHWEGÚ FAIR

cut amethyst hills in a blaze of gold, and the hues of sunset pervade the still reaches, slowly changing like chords of divine music till they pass imperceptibly away into the dusk of twilight. Later, the stars shine out in the clear winter sky, and their light, like quivering spear-points, plays on the face of the waters, hastening on to their union with the sea. The Great Bear, climbing the heavens, points coldly northward,

where imagination pictures the snows of æons lying on the summits of mountains on which man has left no footprint. Near by, the lights of a small village die out one by one, and a great and brooding silence falls upon hillside and plain. It is midnight on the Irrawaddy.

THE THIRD DEFILE

Below the picturesque village of Malé, enclosed in a red-thorn stockade, the river for the third time in its course between the confluence and the sea forces a right of way through hilly country. Malé was once the resting-place of a fugitive queen, and for a short time served as a royal capital. In later days it was the Burmese customs-station on the upper river, and in the last days of 1885, when the kingdom of Burma was hastening to its end, a fleet of the king's war-boats and steamers lay at anchor at Malé, in wild hopes of a French advent across the frontiers of Tonquin. But the French never came, and the last of the house of Alompra was already on his way into exile, followed by his weeping wife and a stricken court, before His Majesty's itinerant ambassadors in Europe had concluded their wanderings in search of an alliance. Leaving Malé, the river, confined between low hills, flows in tranquil splendour under the shadow of the Shwé-u-daung, whose bare serrated peak and sharp declivities rise majestically into the sky, like Spanish hills beyond Gibraltar. The Shwé-u-daung, nine thousand feet in height, is the outer citadel of that

fortress of magnificent mountains in the chambers of which are treasured the finest rubies of the world. Sixty miles inland, in the beautiful Mogôk valley, are the famous ruby mines of Burma. The road is rough and steep, and for five months each year impracticable for wheeled traffic. At best, it is hard going for the long trains of bullock-carts, which creak and toil along its ruts, laden with machinery for the mines and all the requirements of a colony of Englishmen, planted in a secluded valley sixty miles from a highway of communication. But the traveller on horseback, lightly equipped, can make the journey in two days.

Mogôk itself, surrounded by magnificent peaks like the Pingubaung, seven thousand feet in height, and apt to be transfigured at sunset in a glow of red fire suggestive of their priceless contents, is unique in its seclusion and its world-known fame.

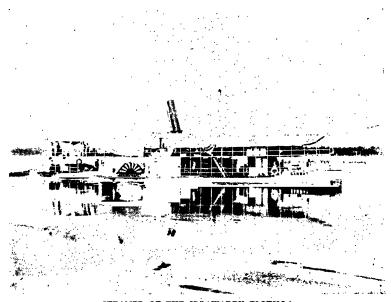
Below the village of Thabeitkin—the port of Mogôk, on the Irrawaddy—there is a charming island pagoda and monastery. Once, and it is not many years ago, the monastery was tenanted by an abbot and his monks and acolytes. Every year, at a great annual festival, the country-side came over in long boats and dugouts, and the pagoda platform was gay with the brilliance of a Burmese festival. Monastery spires and columns, the chapels of the Buddha, and the slopes of the island pagoda, were renovated and gilded with the lavish gold of Burmese Buddhism. In the still waters of the river between the island and the near shore, dogfish, tame and gentle from years of immunity, came each day to

be fed by the monks, and at the year's festival, to be decorated with leaves of gold by the followers of a religion the highest attribute of which is its tenderness for all created life. For the traveller, the pagoda of Thihadaw, with its singular appanage, was one of the most interesting spectacles to be met with on the upper river. But a few years have wrought a change which is not without its symbolism. The island pagoda set in the heart of the Third Defile is still beautiful; but the fingers of decay are busy with its monastery roofs and spires. Their halls and closets lie empty and deserted. The waters of the river are slowly but certainly eating into the fence of wood and stone, built in an earlier decade to protect the island, and time must bring destruction. The monastery fish, no longer fed by its tenants, no longer protected by their presence from secular attack, have grown wild and timid, and no artifice will now induce them to come when summoned by the familiar call. It is believed that the island, consecrated to religion, can never be flooded, however high the river may rise. The pagoda is still firm on its base, its buildings are still habitable; and yet it is

THIHADAW PAGODA, THIRD DEFILE

silent and untenanted. No one will say why. The old monks at Thabeitkin shake their heads and mutter impossible reasons; the fishermen of Thihadaw village say it is because their village has become small. An evil tale of war, which broods sadly over the deserted fane, attributes it to another and a harsher cause. But whatsoever the cause, the result is there, and in a sense it is symbolic of an inevitable decline. Fewer monasteries are built now than in years gone by; fewer scholars chant their lessons in the monastic schools; everywhere there is a loosening of the bonds of the great religious organisation which has ministered so long to the spiritual life of Burma.

A TRIBUTARY

At Thihadaw the defile grows to greater beauty. The single line of hills which has confined the river on each bank rises in height and breaks up into a greater variety of groups, through which the river wanders in long reaches and curves, as placid and calm as untroubled slumber. At Kabwet village, where an

STEAMER OF THE IRRAWADDY FLOTILLA

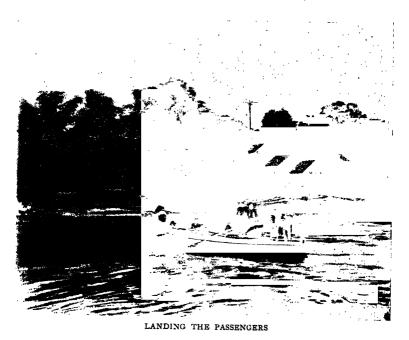
enterprising German used to work the coal mines of the neighbourhood, the river emerges in a great curve from the midst of the higher hills, and widens out, though still restrained for many a mile by low undulating country, beautiful in December with warm autumn hues, till, at Kyaukmyaung, the Third Defile quietly ends. The view, hitherto confined, now broadens out, and

far ahead on the river's horizon loom successive spurs of the Shan mountains towering in stately beauty above the distant city of Mandalay.

Here the great defiles of the Irrawaddy end. The river, leaving its infancy and hot strenuous youth behind it, settles down to maturer life, till at the delta, still many hundred miles distant, its power is broken and lost in the ocean.

The present-day traveller in Burma is borne along the great highway under very pleasant conditions. For nine hundred miles the Irrawaddy is navigated by the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, most of which are well equipped with the comforts of civilisation. For purposes of rapid travel the fast mail-steamers are the more suitable; but for interest and local colour, and for the insight they offer into the life of the people, the great cargo-boats of the flotilla are to be preferred. To the gay, light-hearted Burman, whose philosophy is perfect indolence, and to whom time is indefinite in its opportunities for doing nothing, the speed of the express steamer is of no attraction. A Burmese village which treats the arrival of the mail-packet with calm indifference is plunged into excitement when the hoarse whistle of its slower fellow is borne up the river. On such occasions, Sleepy Hollows, where no one appears to have anything to do but doze in a comfortable corner or bathe in the cool river, attain to a ridiculous energy. For to every little village secluded from the great world beyond it, save in so far as it rests on

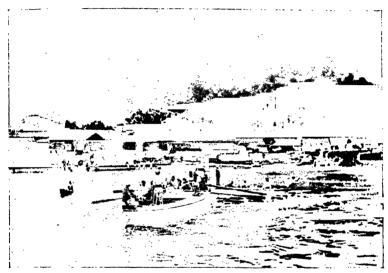
the shores of the noblest of highways, the cargo-boats with huge flats in tow mean the advent of news, of gossip, and of trade; things especially dear to the Burman woman's heart. Each week they leave Man-

LANDING THE PASSENGERS

dalay, the centre of all things to the Upper Burman mind, for the long voyage up the river to Bhamo, and they bring with them all that a Burman heart can desire, all that a Burman village cannot furnish, from tinned Swiss milk and potted salmon to silk and pearls.

The process is eminently simple. The cargo-boat, and at least one of her flats, are partitioned out into stalls which are let for the entire voyage, a matter of

a fortnight, from Mandalay to Bhamo and back. But the stall-holders are wisely conservative, and frequently retain their stalls for years. In this way they build up a business connection, and are well known in all the towns and villages along the river. Thus if the Headman, Moung Bah, of Moda village, wishes for a new silk *putsoe* of the fashionable dog-tooth pattern, or his wife a *tamein* of the new apple-green and pink tartan, or Ma-Hla, the village belle, a necklace of Birmingham pearls, they go down to the steamer landing, and with much detail describe their requirements to Ah Tun the Chinaman, or Sheik Ibrahim the Mohammedan trader, whose long grey beard contrasts strikingly with the hairless faces about him; and in the fulness of time the "fire-boat," trumpeting its advent, brings to each of them his heart's desire.

The transaction, gratifying in itself, is made more so by time. Moung Bah's wish for a fashionable garment was probably inspired by an eloquent hint from the silk dealer, or a glimpse of a Mandalay dandy, when the last boat passed through. A week's reflection eked out with clouds of green tobacco smoke and the enthusiastic advice of his neighbours, a calculation of ways and means, have brought him to a pleasant decision before the boat's return down-stream; and then, the order given, there follows a period of blissful anticipation. If you are travelling up in the boat next voyage, you will see Moung Bah sitting on his haunches on the high foreshore of Moda village, chewing betel-nut with apparent calm; and when the boat is

run alongside and the lascars plunge overboard into the river with a rope to make her fast, and the gangway planks are laid, Moung Bah will walk up gravely to the upper deck and enter into possession of his long-expected purchase. A period of further excitement will follow on his return home, when the fashionable garment will run the fire of domestic criticism, and the

IN FLOOD TIME

loud praise of the village cronies. Business transacted under such conditions is laden with subtle charms for the Oriental. Time, the mere element of hours and minutes, is a thing of no account in a bountiful land, where there are no paupers and no poor law; in a smiling land where it is always afternoon.

The deck of a cargo-boat is itself a microcosm of Burmese life. Down the centre there is the long

double line of stalls, back to back, each stall separated from its neighbour by a row of bales or boxes; and in the small square spaces between, the stall-holders have their habitation. Here at all hours you see them seated on gay carpets, reclining on soft quilts, slumbering under silken tartans, flirting, gossiping, smoking contentedly, or playing animated chess. A Burmese game of chess is a unique entertainment. Everything pertaining to it is of massive proportions. The chessboard is of solid wood nearly two feet square; the squares look gigantic; the pieces, rudely carved, are made to stand hard usage, for the Burman throws a curious vigour into his play, each piece being brought down on the board with a sounding whack. In addition to the players, there is always a group of friends and self-constituted advisers round the chessboard. Each of these takes a keen interest in the game, and pours forth his advice with great eagerness. The player, with an amiable, superior smile, plays his own game, and when this is at variance with proffered advice, each move is followed by long-drawn sounds of pessimistic regret and resolute head-shaking. One or two spectators who do not understand the game look on in silence, smoking their long green cheroots in a manner suggestive of deep and concentrated thought. The game, in short, is interesting, because there is so much human interest in it.

The flats in tow of a cargo-steamer are occupied as a rule by a poorer class of stall-holders than those in the steamer itself. Silks, cotton goods, fur coats, socks,

linen, china, pottery, ironware, and the gewgaws of vanity here give way to the necessities of life—to salt and onions, piles of imported flour, molasses in little rhomboids like toffy, sugar in crystalline heaps, baskets of potatoes, red and yellow chillies, and raw produce of the most bewildering variety. Most of the stall-holders here are women. The atmosphere is wholly different from that on the adjoining steamer. The curtains are let down, and a soft half-light pervades the flat. In the dim vista, broken here and there by bars of light in which the myriad motes riot, women lie asleep resting against soft flour-bags, or sit chatting in undertones in small groups. In this way the hours and weeks pass by, till they grow to years, and in some cases a lifetime.

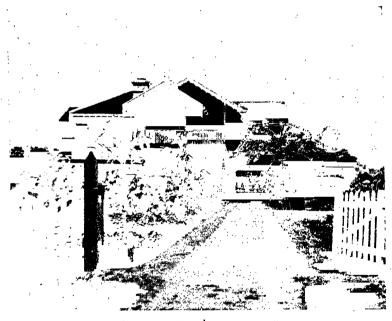
COOLIE LADS

CHAPTER IX

BHAMO

BHAMO, like the river on which it is built, lives a double life. In the rains its low grounds and pasture-lands lie flooded by the encroaching waters. Its tenements on the river's edge exist on sufferance, in imminent danger of being flooded and swept away. Its streets are moribund and squalid. One looks in vain for the famous trading-town on the border, the southern gateway of China, the traditional meeting-place of Chino-Burmese commerce. One looks in vain, because the road to China, on which so many embassies have travelled, is impassable for caravans in the rains, and Bhamo has perforce relapsed into a small and unimportant Burmese town.

But the approach of winter heralds a great change. Over the wild border-land through which winds the Ambassador's road, roughest of international highways, come the long caravans from China—thousands of hardy

mules, hundreds of blue-clad labourers, and many portly merchants, filled out to abnormal size by dint of satin coats and furs, upon small ponies which amble hardily along. From the Shan States, north and east, come picturesque crowds of varied nationality, a permutation

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER'S HOUSE AT BHAMO

of Chinese, Burmese, and many-tribed Shan. And from the border highlands descend the cateran Kachin, to whom the Government now pays a fixed toll in lieu of the income they formerly derived, by robbery, murder, and blackmail, from the traders who made their way along this dubious highway. Bhamo now breaks out into new life and colour, exchanging its moribund

isolation for the concourse of many visitors, like any tourist resort in the season.

The centre of its life, in one sense, is the Court-house, where the administrative Power resides. Here, when he is not tramping over the hills with dynamite cartridges in his pockets, blasting roads, pursuing male-factors, and generally bringing home to the people in his charge the personality of rule, sits the Head of the District. Like most Englishmen in the East, he is a man who plays many parts, and during the long hours of each day that he sits in the red-roofed Court-house, he transacts a curious variety of business. Vendettas of many generations are healed here; thieves are sent to prison; murderers to death; frontiers are delimited; gun-licences are issued; tribute is brought to the coffers of the State; campaigns are planned; all, indeed, that concerns the administration of a frontier tract, from high politics to the parochialism of a petty municipality, is centred here in his person. Outside, a miscellaneous life, the reflex of what is transacted within, has its being. A Sikh sentry, with bayonet gleaming in the sun, walks to and fro before the treasury; in the litigants' shed the witnesses are assembled; on the grass of the court-yard the harnessed mare of the Deputy Commissioner feeds complacently, aware of her privileges Burmans in silken kilts and flaming headgear, Shan in loose trousers and big straw hats, Kachin with naked swords, real Chinamen in felt boots and black satin caps, hybrid Chinamen in English hats, come and go in an incessant leisurely stream.

BHAMO AT HIGH WATER

And out on the white high-road a British soldier swings by, his shoulders square, his boots creaking, the silver head of his regimental cane glinting in the light.

A COOLIE, BHAMO

About the Court-house lies the town. Here is the street of the Indians, a thoroughfare of tailors, industrious to the click of sewing machines; of tinkers surrounded by their flashing wares; of small-store men; of dealers in cloth, and haberdashers. At its corner there is a billiard saloon kept by a Jew. Beyond it is the market-place, the rendezvous of all strangers to Bhamo. There of a morning the country folk bring the produce of their gardens for sale. Laughter and high voices fill the air, and the life of the many peoples is afoot. Along the stony highway the trader from Yunnan rides by in a fast amble on his shaggy steed. An almond-eyed porter, a man of thews and sinews, struggles slowly behind with a heavy load upon his back. One has seen his counterpart upon many a Chinese vase.

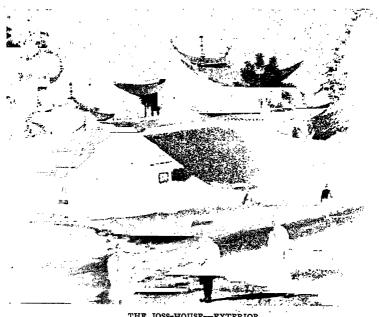
A COOLIE, BHAMO

Outside the market one looks across to the white and grey walls and distinctive roofs of Chinese houses. In

the space between, in hollows into which the river, at its rising, rushes in, Chinese market gardeners are toiling over rows of cabbages and beans. They go to and fro in their blue clothes and large sun-hats, with cans of water slung from poles across their shoulders. An ingenious bamboo spout in each can makes the water splash in large silvery jets. In all that a Chinaman does, and has, there is something distinctive, from the decoration of his house, to the pattern of his pipe and the spray of his water-can. To understand him one must clear one's mind of all prepossession.

IN CHINA STREET

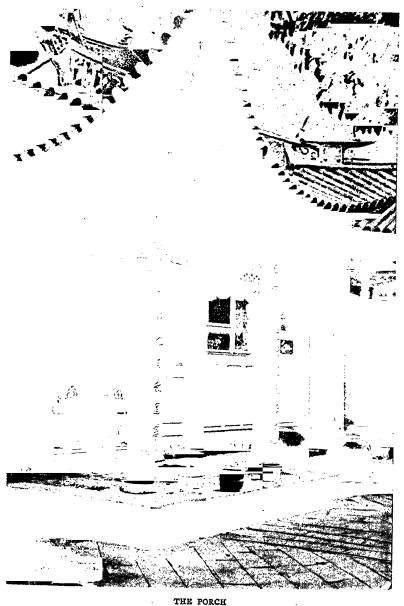
From the market-place it is an easy transition to China Street, the most important thoroughfare in Bhamo. A loud clatter of hoofs upon the stone pavement marks the approach of a party of traders, one of whom dismounts before a shop. A small lad, running out, leads off his stout nag with its tasselled trappings swaying about it, through a dark passage, to a stable hidden away in some presumptive backyard, while the man of trade,

stretching his legs, cramped by the short high stirrups of his people, yields himself up to the attentions of his wife, upon whose round celestial face there is spread a gratified smile. Crowds of his friends gather round him to hear the news, and there, seated on the floor of his counting-house, we may leave him in peace.

THE JOSS-HOUSE—EXTERIOR

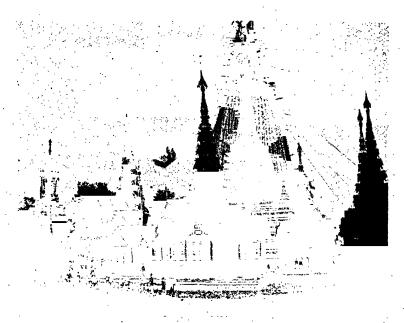
A more accessible person to-day is a leading member of the community, a plump figure of a man, whom I am just in time to stop as he is dashing off on his new bicycle to a meeting of the Town Council. He is dressed in a loose coat, trousers which are bound tightly about his ankles, a black silk cap, and white felt shoes; and he is portly, affable, and clean. He walks

YUNANNESE

some way with me up the street to the handsome doorway of his house, with its carved front and fantastic eaves, and begs me to enter. In the narrow front-verandah, open to the street, bales of cotton are piled high against the wall, and a tired and dusty traveller from China is taking his ease. Passing in through the first room, I enter a court open to the sky, and arched over at intervals with roses. To come in here is to step into another and more delightful world, from the blazing thoroughfare without. Beyond it is the reception-room, with its lacquered furniture, and its pictures hung upon the walls. One of these is a portrait done by a Rangoon photographer; another is a screen painted in water-colours, an exquisite study of pink flowers drooping

THE PORCH

over water. It was done by some far-away artist in civilised China. Tea is served in delicate porcelain cups; and cigarettes, the handiwork of my host's Burmese wife, are produced from an inner room by the lady herself. We sit in the lacquered chairs, ranged stiffly against the wall with the formality of a French salon. Two of the more taciturn members of the party remain silent, smoking their long silver pipes; but my host is cheery and sociable and quite ready to talk. He explains that he and his two brothers are in partnership, and that the arrangement between them is that each shall spend three years, after an absence of six, in his native town of Momein, in Southern China. They have houses at Momein, Bhamo, and Rangoon. They deal in raw cotton and piece-goods, and import a variety of

THE JANITOR

Chinese goods, including silk and felt. As to railways, they are very well, and those that the Government has made are likely to do Bhamo no harm so long as they stop short at Myitkina. Certainly there is no lack of brisk business in Bhamo to-day, and even as I sit here in

SHWEKYINA
Showing incidentally the manner of mounting a "hti" on a Pagoda

the cool shelter of the inner court, men go to and fro through the business premises, packing bales and studying invoices, and a stream of traffic passes down the sunlit street.

But city fathers have their duties, so bidding my host adieu, I join the moving throng, and glance as I go at the strange shops of chemists, and of the dealers in

From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

felt rugs, and at crowded eating-houses, and the Chinese Secret Societies' Club, till I reach the entrance to the joss-house, a gateway in the roadside, opening into a long sunlit corridor paved with brick, which ends at the door of the first court of the temple. Through its circle there is a full view of the joss-house, rising up from the shady court, all gilt and colour and winged roof. On each side of the porch there is a caparisoned horse, led by a splendid figure of a man, with a great waist, and Tartar eyebrows, and a tremendous air. Horse and man are screened behind a circular window, richly carved into a pattern of rosettes. Overhead there is a theatre, where entertainments are given to the company assembled below.

There follows the second court, bounded at its far end by a temple in which strange figures are depicted, and incense burns perpetually. Through a narrow doorway behind the shrine there is a passage into the third court, and so on to the ultimate shrine, where on high there is raised a white marble figure of the Buddha.

STRANGE GODS

Extraordinary beings surround this central image, making of the place more a chamber of horrors than the shrine of a pure faith.

The joss-house is used as a club, and under the shelter of its trees in the open courts, men with time upon their hands pass many hours of the day, sipping tea, and smoking their elegant silver pipes. Here, too, the opium smoker finds seclusion, and as I go by, where a young peach-tree is breaking into bloom, the very harbinger of spring, I find him lying stretched upon a sofa of polished vermilion lacquer, his glazed unconscious eyes half shut, dreaming the strange dreams for which he lives.

A SHAN

Outside of Bhamo lies Sampenago, the dead city which was great for a thousand years before Bhamo—the potters' village—came into existence. Pathways lead to it through the heart of the river-jungle, where the purple Taping, laden with the waters of Momein, steals through waving grasses to its union with the Irrawaddy. Aisles of old pagodas bring me to the Shwe-Kyina with its

UNDER THE CLIFFS OF BHAMO

golden spire. Here the highland Shan encamp, and the smoke of their cooking fires climbs up into the placid sky. Beyond the red-gold and grey spires, another path leads down, through a wide tract of dog-roses in bloom, to the edge of the Irrawaddy. The foreshore under the heights of the village is crowded with rose bushes, which lie buried for half the year under the waters of the river; but in the spring they become the home of thousands of little birds, whose melody fills the air with joy.

A SHAN

But it is the river that claims attention; for it lies here below the lofty bank, broad and beautiful, a highway of the world. The sun, nearing the horizon, is partially hidden by broken masses of cloud, through which his flame breaks in long ribbons and searchlights of fire. All the river, north of a clear straight line across it, lies in purple shadow; all to the south, in a blaze of light. I stand and watch the river porpoises plunging like steel in the oily water, the swallows wheeling in swift circles of flight; and the voices of men are borne up to me, dim at first, then swelling louder as they come by in boats, invisible under the cliffs, and so, till they drift past into the

silence. And I experience that strange and rare emotion, of looking on at a world of which I form no part; a new world of blue mountains, and wide river, and placid calm, and unknown peoples, into which I have dropped by some mysterious chance.

From Sampenago a sheltered way leads through the village of Wethali, where lives a colony of Assamese, the descendants of five hundred men-at-arms who came over in the reign of Bodaw-phaya with the brother of the King of Assam.

Among the races who throng, during the winter months, the streets of Bhamo town, the Kachin with his embroidered bag slung under one arm, his broad half-naked *dah* thrown across his back, is not the least conspicuous. He comes down from the hills with vegetables and fruits, and such sundries as a tiger-skin, some gold-dust, or a spinel picked up in a watercourse, and barters these in Bhamo for the civilised commodities he desires.

On the outskirts of the town, facing the highway, stands the Kachin Waing, or caravanserai. It is not the kind of place in which Haroun-al-Raschid might have sojourned, for it consists of little more than an open shed in a yard enclosed by a bamboo fence. Yet it is possessed of a primitive interest. The Kachin, who carries his few necessaries with him, is content with such shelter as a bare roof may afford, and it is here in the Waing that he sleeps and feeds during his brief visits to the town. Sometimes I go out there in the early morning, while the night mists still brood

over the low pasture-lands of Bhamo, to see him making ready his breakfast. A small earthen pot is hung like a gypsy kettle over a fire of slender twigs, and seated before it, surrounded by the baskets of fruit and vegetables he has brought down to sell, he leisurely peels a pile of onions, dropping them one by one into the simmering pot, in which a handful of small fry are already stewing. His fellow near him pares small

THE SHAN ENCAMPMENT

faggots, with dexterous *dah* strokes for the fire. From a basket of miscellaneous articles he draws forth neat cylinders of bamboo, containing salt and condiments, and finally a short cylinder cut from the giant *wabo*, and containing drinking-water filled the previous day at a mountain stream. The sooty pot is then removed from the fire, and the company settle down to their meal, with a savage, phlegmatic indifference to observation. The same process is going on throughout the

Waing, and I pass out by a small mat cottage at the gate (where a small clerk sits compiling trade statistics), with the feeling of having emerged from a bygone and primitive existence.

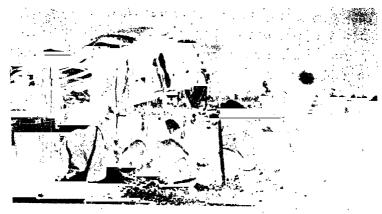
Far away at the other end of the town is the Shan Waing, even more primitive in the hospitality it offers; for here the Shan and the Panthay who frequent it are all encamped out on the open plain. Yellow masses of straw lying scattered about contrast with the blue clothes of the muleteers at work, packing sacks with dried fish and salt. I see them there seated in the open, chatting and laughing hoarsely, far into the night, in groups collected round blazing fires. Out of the dusk loom pack-saddles, piled in heaps to make a shelter, and pack-animals herding close together from instinct. Overhead the stars gleam bright in the clear winter sky, and a few paces away the river flows darkly past, with a hurtling murmur against the high mud cliffs.

CHAPTER X

THE ROAD TO CHINA

PAST the Kachin Waing, and Bhamo Fort, where of nights the bugles blow and the King's health is drunk in regimental messes, the road to China takes its dusty way through a great forest of noble trees and dense underwoods, the blue mountains ever beyond. Here the long caravans defile, and strange people take their way—the tall Yunnanese on his saddle mule, the Panthay with his string of beasts led by the *gaung* with his clanging bell, the Shan with his red salt-laden cattle, the Kachin driving harnessed pigs to market, the trooper with his rifle at his saddle-bow and chain-armour on his shoulders, the Head of the District on his blood Arab, the little clerk with his pen behind his ear. Before some of those who travel to-day, there lies a long rough journey into China. My own way is a shorter one—to Sinlum-kaba.

This place, with its long name, is the summer retreat from Bhamo. It stands upon a crest of the Kachin hills six thousand feet above the sea, and it is good to go out to it, for it is a place with the atmosphere of a new world—a place of beginnings. Its wooded knolls are being cleared to-day, for the first time it

would seem since time began; an orchard of fruit trees—the pear, the cherry, and the peach—is growing up from plants brought from England, and this is their first season of flower. A garden of daisies, primroses, heart's-ease, and other gracious things is beginning to bloom. The little rivulets are being spanned by rustic bridges, the sound of saws and hammers floats across the valley, breaking the slumberous stillness with the music of man, the dwelling-maker; nameless places are for the first time coming into possession of a name. The little men of the hills, who wear blue clothes and carry *dahs*, sword and axe in one, and distend their ears with amber tubes as wide as the barrel of an 8-bore, go to and fro, digging and blasting; unspoilt children ready to take a lesson from the right man. And the right man seems to have come here to teach them the necessary lesson. "The Kachin," he says eloquently, "is of all road coolies that I have seen the best, for

KACHIN ENCAMPED OUTSIDE BHAMO

THE ROAD TO CHINA

hill-roads at all events. Working on daily labour he will willingly do eight or ten hours' hard work a day, attacking a piece of rockwork or jungle-cutting with a furious energy, and signalising his success over obstacles with shouts of delight. He requires, however, to be handled carefully, sympathetically, and with perfect justice, or he is absolutely intractable."

KACHIN WOMEN AND GIRLS

On a knoll above a streamlet there is the military post, and a sentry walks to and fro before it through the hours. One can see the gleam of his bayonet a long way off in the noon sunlight. The silver flash of a heliograph on the hill links the settlement with the outer world. The air on a spring day is cool and mellow, the sun a friendly neighbour. But the nights are chilly, and towards dawn a great cold clutches the earth and quickens the air. The view from here stretches away on the west to the plain country, where the Irrawaddy winds in great loops and folds of silver

and gold. One can see from this height how, coming from the north, it sweeps north again through the Second Defile, as if it never meant to reach the sea. And east and south and north there is a billowy sea of mountains half veiled in mist. The peaks of China climb up on the distant horizon, the border states of Hotha-Lahsa lie between, and here and there, alone on the wide sea, stand the British outposts.

Of the nature of life in these hill-tracts on the edge of China some curious particulars are recorded in the diaries of the British officers who travel over them every winter. Vendetta is the keynote of Kachin politics, and nowhere in the world is it carried to a more subtle point. One of the aims of the British administration is to stop such feuds and teach the hill-men the meaning of a central power. Yet year after year the vendetta goes on, and strange cases are chronicled in the Government annals. "On the 9th," I read, "the Civil Officer moved on to Sadasup. He had asked the Walawpum Duwa to meet him, but the latter regretted his inability to come, as he had lately raided 'Nong village and was expecting retaliation. This raid was in unadministered territory, but the history of it is worth recording. The Walawpum Duwa's younger brother had at the close of the last rains put up during a journey at the house of one 'Nlon-Lein 'Nong. On leaving, he had given offence to two women by mounting his pony in the porch. He dismounted, but again mounted at the *nat* stools; the women then cursed him and foretold his death

for flouting their *nats*. On his return home he fell ill with fever, and it was evident to the Kachin mind that the curse of the 'Nong women was at work. Then the Duwa's general set off with sixty followers

KACHIN POLICEMAN: UNDRESS

KACHIN POLICEMAN: FULL DRESS

armed with thirty guns, attacked the 'Nong, burnt N'long-La's house to the ground, and killed two of his women. The spell, however, was not lifted and the Duwa's younger brother died."

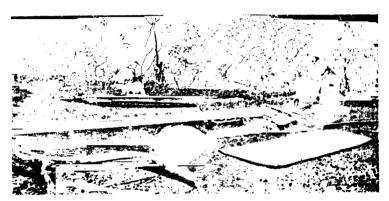
Again: "Two sepoys deserted in 1892 and found their way into the Sana tract. They were promptly murdered, the reason given being revenge for the death of two relations of the murderers after they had been arrested at the instigation of the British authorities for the murder of Margary. It was admitted that the Chinese officials were directed to release these Kachins upon a representation by the English officer, to whom they were shown for identification, that they were not the persons wanted; but their death was due to their arrest, and therefore indirectly to the energy of our representatives in pressing the Chinese for reparation."

KACHIN CHILDREN

The Kachin's contempt for life generally is only a little less acute than that of a Chinese officer for the life of any Kachin or similar barbarian.

The following is a refreshing example:—"A Kachin named Saw Taw had lent four annas (four pence) to a Burman called Me Dain. Some time afterwards Me

Dain went up into the Kachin hills, where he met Saw Taw, who asked him to repay the four annas. Me Dain told the Kachin not to bother him, and called him a dog. The Kachin went away, and coming back about an hour afterwards, speared Me Dain, who was sitting in a house with several others. Saw Taw was sentenced to death and executed."

Of the curious medley of duties discharged by the

KACHIN WOMAN WEAVING

British officers who rule these tracts, some impression may be gathered from the following illustrations: "On November 13th, some twenty Kachins from Mutu came to Saingkin, eight miles from Bhamo on the Taping, murdered the headman's wife and carried off two of his daughters. The Deputy Commissioner went after the raiders, with seven military policemen and the Myo-ôk, but owing to delay in information, he started eight or nine hours behind them. He actually passed them, but it was then dark, and they got up

and did not halt till they were over the border." (I well remember his hurried departure in pursuit, for I was in Bhamo that night.)

"A dispute between the Marus and Asis, which had long been threatening to come to open conflict, had to be finally disposed of. Some time back Mr. Rae and Mr. Todd-Naylor had ordered the Asis to remove the small village of Laban out of the territory of Mungkung village of the Marus; they had not done so, and encouraged by immunity and the presence of the Chinese, had been increasing the number of houses from other Asi villages. Mr. Hertz visited the place, had the village completely pulled down, and removed, and fixed the boundary beyond further dispute. He then returned to Pansibum and proceeded with the construction of the post. The establishment of the post at Pansibum is of high importance to the peace of the frontier tribes, the Asis, and it enables us to get behind nearly the whole of the Kachins, both present and future, north and south of the Namsiri valley.

"On January 16th, Mr. Rae started again from Bhamo, with a reduced escort of twenty-five men, to Sinlum-kaba. Mr. Rae, who had been interviewing the neighbouring Kawri chiefs, devoted his attention to the constant cattle thefts for which these Kachins are responsible. The northern Kawris, owing to their proximity both to the Chinese frontier and to the plains about Bhamo, have become increasingly daring cattle thieves, and fining and punishment had proved ineffective. Great assistance was received in the work

from the Duwas of Sima, Hoton, Sinlum-gale, Lawmun, and Mantan, especially by the first named, an influential and loyal man. The result was that thirty-four cattle and ponies were recovered, and twenty-eight

KACHIN BURYING-PLACE IN THE FOREST

persons convicted and punished for cattle theft, and it is hoped that the traffic will have received a crippling blow."

And of the *raison d'être* of Sinlum-kaba, this place where the daisies and heart's-ease are growing to-day,

and the peach and the cherry from English stock are coming into bloom, there is this account in the official annals: "It is evident now that the Kachins in Bhamo have realised that they have found their masters, and are prepared to settle down into law-respecting, if not law-abiding subjects. Government by column has now died a natural death; the time for that has passed, and what we now require is to impose a form of yoke which will be found to press lightly, but firmly, and above all continuously. To bring this about it is desirable to make the hill tribes conscious of a presence constantly in their midst, instead of the bright meteoric passage of a column, leaving increased darkness behind it. We require to establish a permanent centre for enlightenment and domination, to which Kachins will be able to come without obstruction from all parts and at all times. Instead of having to undergo, whenever they have a complaint to make, the expense and discomfort of a visit to Bhamo, where heat and

A PEDLAR

dust and alien surroundings make the Kachin wretched, and he wastes day after day at the court, fleeced by petition writers, and worried by Burman underlings, he wants to have a court held by a sympathetic official, who knows his language well, and to which he can go without ever leaving the shelter of his hills."

Book IV

THE SOUTHERN IRRAWADDY

The Lower Courses—Prome—To Thayetmyo—A Side Issue—To Minbu—The River in Action—Mud Volcanoes—To Yenan-Gyaung—The Road to Pagan—Tangyi-Sway-Daw—Above Pagan—In Mandalay

"It was impossible not to ask oneself when looking on that splendid stream: Can it fail to become, before many years are past, one of the great highways of the world, though so lately unlocked for the real entrance of Commerce, and still but imperfectly set free? Of what trade may it not become the channel? To what nations may it not open the way, along whose coasts we are now vainly seeking an entrance that is denied us? What new power, arts, knowledge, and religious truth may not crowd upwards within a few years along this magnificent avenue?"

MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE.

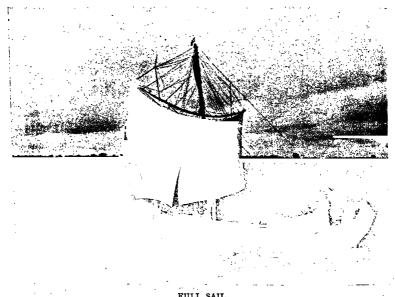
CHAPTER XI

THE LOWER COURSES

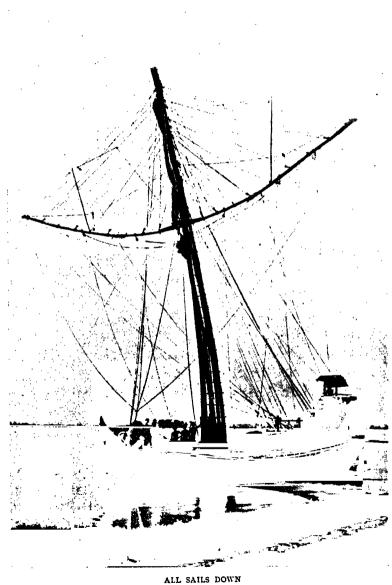
THERE is a break in the rains: it is mid-August, and we are steaming serenely up the narrowing waters of the Hlaing, that branch of the Irrawaddy on which Rangoon is built. The capital already seems far away, and the true Burma is unfolding before my vision. The air blows free here over the wide fields, green with the young rice; the little villages deploy on the water's edge; the beautiful long boats of the people lie at anchor, like ships of vikings, or drawn up ashore—*siccas machinæ carinas*—mingling in the landscape with the gardens and the palms and the brown house-tops.

Here the spires of lonely monasteries cleave the air, the monks go by in small canoes, under a nimbus of yellow glory shed by their parasols; the nets of the fishers spread their toils on the face of the river, or loom up like inky shrouds over the verdant fields. Here the sailing boats speed by, and the white gleams of their sails flash over the country-side, as they sweep along their secret highways invisible to the eye. They look very beautiful, and a little mysterious, for the creeks lie low, below the level of the fields, and the great sails only pattern the air. One can follow in this

way the winding of a creek, although one cannot see it, and for my part I am never tired of tracing the white flash of their wings, as they speed over these hidden inland waters. The river banks are gay at intervals with vast plantations of the Dhanni palm, whose green and orange blades curve and shimmer under every

FULL SAIL

breath of the passing wind. But a full hour is accomplished before the ship gets clear of the suburbs of Rangoon, and right into the heart of the country.

Near Rangoon itself there is a different picture, scarcely less attractive; for the river pulses there with the life of a great maritime city. Tugs with the heart of Leviathan throb gallantly on their way; cargo boats, heavily laden, move slowly; sampans creak for ever up

ALL SAILS DOWN

and down the channel, bobbing on the waves like gulls; rice mills, immense and stately, with the old-fashioned air of Dutch houses, tower up like amphibians from the edge of the water, their pent and gabled roofs glistening with yellow dust. Clouds of dark smoke trail away from their lofty chimneys, dun cataracts of husk pour incessantly from their waste-pipes, and all the river crinkles with laughter to see the stuff floating helplessly away to sea. Long before the outlines of the first great chimney become visible, one can tell that one is nearing the city, from the husks that go drifting by. Some day a man will find out a way of turning these husks to gold, and then he will grow rich and return to his own country, and the river will be carpeted no more.

From the mills the river banks slope down to where the *peingaws* and the *hnaws* ride buoyantly at anchor, and a living stream of men flows to and fro between. Very swiftly the rice is borne away from their holds and cast into the agony of the mills, thence to emerge only for its long voyage to the West. And these men at work look from the ship, as she sweeps by, like some colony of ants industrious on a sunlit morning.

Over all this world of detail, over all the throbbing fretful life of the river, there gleams the golden bell-top of the Shway Dagôn, something serene, majestic, almost divine, and it is the last object upon which my eyes rest before the ship, swinging out of the main river, enters the narrower channel of the Panhlang.

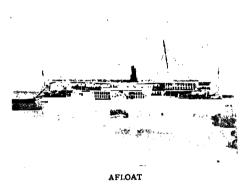
As we move on, the minor incidents of travel unfold themselves, each with its inner significance. I note the

great superiority of the iron-roofed monasteries over the humble tenements of the peasantry ; and the prominent house of the Chinaman, pushing his way to fortune.

CROSSING THE CREEK

The Burman folk plough through the slush to the river's edge, the Chinaman makes for himself a wooden causeway. I note the signboard of the public house, here in the rural part of the country, with its symbols, a scarlet tumbler and a black bottle ; the police stations of yellow, loop-holed masonry, and the villages, each like a little ruddy-purple island in a vast wind-ruffled sea of green. Creek after creek leads inland to other centres of life, and vistas of shining palms and winding watercourses flash before my eyes.

Gradually the face of the landscape changes, the river

passing slowly from a tidal creek to an inland water. No longer does my vision range over vast deltaic spaces. The mightiest trees, dark, cumulose, and splendid, clothe both banks of the river, marshalling its progress. Miles of glistening plantains follow its curves, and hedges of tall river-grass wave over the lips of the water. There is, in spite of tropic exuberance, a regularity and order in the scenery, which give it a park-like character. Red villages rise up at intervals, between the river and the lines of trees, and as the ship goes by, little children, bare as Adam in his better days, dance and clap their hands and mimic the droning chant of the leadsman as he calls the deeps of the channel. The more curious of the village folk come out of their houses to look at the passing show, and make remarks about the white man on the steamer. These are nearly always women.

AFLOAT

Returning rice-boats, high out of the water, lie at anchor, waiting for the tide to take them home, while others with bellying sails, and holds full to the brim with rice, go gallantly down to their traffic with the world. A stray launch sends her shrill whistle down the lane of waters, bringing a bevy of laden boats in

her wake. Flags and streamers flutter in the air, and slow grey rafts of timber, the produce of primeval forests, float down the yellow stream. It is yellow and thick with loam, and far away on the fringes of the ocean it is building up a new world, as in bygone days it built up all that the eye now rests upon here.

Through the gaps in the endless avenues which line the river's banks, I get a glimpse of the world of tropical splendour that lies beyond. Heart-shaped creepers cluster up the giant trunks of trees; parrots shriek, and king-fishers tremble in the air. An added richness of colour comes with the afternoon. The trees in shadow gather new depths of green, and look as if they were cut in velvet; the slant sunlight falls with a new glory on the opposite shores, and the face of the river grows beautiful with lustrous calm.

TIMBER RAFT

I cease to ask the names of villages as they pass by; to take account of the passing hours; to count the miles. Nothing seems here of much account beside the dreamy, endless river; nothing of any consequence at all in this El Dorado of peace.

A culmination comes with the setting of the sun. At

this season of the year, when the sky is not overcast with rain, this last hour of the day is inexpressibly beautiful. The river turns to a flood of gold, and the marble clouds become transfigured in mysteries of light. It would be useless to attempt the description of so much glory in words, the "shadows of a shadow world."

Lastly, there comes the night, and the crickets cheep from the thickets, and the frogs croak from the marshy fringes of the river. And here it may be noted that this paradise breeds the largest and most virulent mosquitoes in Burma. "At this place," wrote an ambassador of England a hundred years ago, "we

AT ANCHOR

spent a very comfortless night; it is a part of the river remarkable for being infested by mosquitoes of an unusual size, and venomous beyond what I ever felt in any other country; two pair of thick stockings were insufficient to defend my legs from their attacks."

As long as the steamers run at full speed, the draft made by their movement keeps the enemy at bay; but the grinding of the anchor chains is a signal for attack, and he invades in hordes. The slow-moving boats of the country fare worst; but a night in the Panhlang creek is an experience that all travellers willingly avoid.

YANDOON TO PROME

PLOUGHING

Some time in the dawn, we pass up by Yandoon (rendezvous of all the boats that bear the Irrawaddy trade, and chief depôt for the sale of stinking fish) into the main eastern branch of the great river. It is wide enough here, and splendid enough, to rank by itself as a river of the world. No longer is it possible to shout across it from bank to bank. It loses much of its winding beauty, its hedges of giant grass, its avenues of stately forest. Its sweep is too wide to be compassed at a glance, or measured by the eye. Immensity is now its chief characteristic. It trails away from one end of the misty horizon to the other; it dominates the entire landscape, and conveys the impression of a world of waters.

As we near Donabyu, there is a village on our right, protected by embankments against the flood. All along here these embankments exist, and the bed of the river is being slowly lifted above the level of the surrounding lands. Some day the river will burst its bonds, and produce great catastrophes.

The little village is graced with a small pagoda, all covered with new gold. On the foreshore the village boys play at "Association" football, with such a degree of vivacity and animation as only the laziest people in the world can compass. Sometimes the football falls into the river, where it bobs helplessly to and fro, till it is rescued and sent back ashore with a kick from a naked toe. The village cattle and the village dogs reflect in their appearance the general prosperity. Wealth is stamped upon every feature of the landscape, and there is room for many millions more than there are at present to share it.

On the farther shore lies Donabyu, its importance marked by its golden pagoda and its long lines of iron roofs. Facing it is one of the many low-lying islands embraced by the river in its flood season. It is covered with a dense forest of river-grass, which bends under the breezes, and is blown about like the tresses of a girl. Here, as all along the river, the *peingaws*, drawn ashore and loftier than the houses, or propelled by twenty rowers, or flying like great birds up the river with the gale behind them, are the feature of every landscape, and objects of perpetual interest. Burmese craftsmanship has produced nothing that surpasses them.

Donabyu (White-Peacock Town) has played its part in history, and one cannot pass it by without thinking of the brave Bandoola, who tried all in vain to stem the tide of British invasion. Rangoon had already fallen, and the hopes of the country were centred in the little town with its fortress and its garrison of fifteen thousand men.

"The main work," as the historian tells, "was a stockaded parallelogram of one thousand yards by seven hundred, which was on the bank well above the level of the river. On the river face were fifty cannon of various calibre, whilst the approach on the land side was defended by two outworks. General Cotton's force carried the first stockade at the point of the bayonet, but was repulsed from the main work, Captains Cannon and Rose being killed, and the greater number of the men killed or wounded. General Cotton then retreated down the river waiting for reinforcements. Sir Archibald Campbell, the Commander-in-Chief, who was advancing north up the valley of the Hlaing, fell back, established his headquarters at Henzada and proceeded down the river. On arrival before Donabyu, he constructed batteries of heavy artillery, the enemy making numerous sorties with a view of interrupting the work. When the batteries were completed they opened a fire of shot, shell, and rockets, and next day the Burmans were discovered to be in full retreat. This was subsequently found to be due to the death of Bandoola, who had been killed by the bursting of a shell."

Again, a little later, a Dacoit chief held for a little while

REAPERS AT DONABYU

a British force at bay at Donabyu. But the tale is an old one, fading swiftly into the past. The rice-fields in their season wave yellow in the midst of Bandoola's entrenchments, and a grave or two, and lines of grass-covered ramparts, are all that survive of that episode.

Two hours north of Donabyu there become visible for the first time the blue outlines of those hills which henceforth to the uttermost northern frontier are never absent from the landscape. At noon the river spreads over immense areas, encircling islands and flooding the low-lying tracts. Its width, one would think, is at least miles. At two o'clock it still continues immense, but is less scattered. Numerous villages deploy on its banks, many of them large and flourishing. But a village here makes in truth but a small feature of the landscape; little more than a line between vast spaces of cloud-emblazoned sky and dun water. Palmyras mark its presence, and the tapering spires of pagodas and monasteries lift it up to some little dignity. Women, clad in the one garment that does not detract from their natural beauty, come down with their pitchers to the water, and the children, clad in nothing, plunge into it and swim, as happy and as much at home in the bountiful river as they are on land.

The colours at this season (August) vary with the rain, which comes down in purple sheets, blotting out whole tracts of the horizon, while the sunlight pours and flames on the rest of the circle. The only monotony is that of space.

As we near Henzada, the apex of the Delta, the

river makes a splendid curve, and the waste of watei looks like the opening of a sea.

At Henzada the people are busy at prayer, an the chant of the worshippers is borne in measure cadence over the dark face of the river. Within, th raised highways are lined with the trays of Burmes maidens, whose clear brains were meant for the bus ness of life, as their eyes, dark and lustrous, wer assuredly meant for love. Near at hand the rollickin Chinaman does a roaring trade at the eating-house and liquor-shops. Small boys play at marbles on th highway in the thick of the traffic. The wind blow where it lists, amongst the stately palms and th tinkling summits of monasteries and fanes.

The late evening brings us to Myanoung. An this is what Myanoung looks like at evening, on a da in the rainy season.

Lofty embankments protect it from the river flood: Tall palms rise up in procession about these higl ways, and cluster in stately groups beside the wate The embankment highway, escaping from the tene ments, cleaves its way through the country-side, parall to the river. Marshy hollows, the relics of som inundation, flank it on the one side, a muddy cattl track, scored with the hoof-prints of the driven beast runs below it on the other. Vast spaces, emeral green with rice, stretch away to the feet of the blu mountains, which shut out the western sea from th home of the Burman. Up there in their fastnesse elephants in herds roam unmolested through the primev:

IN THE VILLAGE

forest, the sambhar bellows in the dense thickets, the tiger and the panther stalk their prey, and the stray Chin alone stands for the supremacy of man.

The scene that is thus unfolded before the eyes is one of distinct beauty; a feast of colour in its way. The sky, laden with heavy rain-clouds, runs the whole gamut of the spectrum. But when the sun goes down, and the clouds chance to gather in an

THE APEX OF THE DELTA AT MYANOUNG

unbroken canopy overhead, they become a burden upon the spirit. The world grows small, the motionless air lies heavy on the lids of earth, the soul of the spectator is prisoned within the universal gloom. It is at such times that the white man, whose destiny has brought him here, feels himself an alien and alone. The merry people, the blue hills, the shining river, are phases only of his exile. Pestiferous insects fall in hecatombs into his food, and leave their

malodorous trail in his hair. Vicious ones inflame the tender places on his skin. The dank air creeps into his blood, the loneliness sours his heart and breaks his nerve. Tinkle of pagoda bells, rustling breezes in the palms, the murmur of the river; what are these but aspects of an endless monotony? He would give them all for the sound of an Englishwoman's voice, the sight of an English pasture-land in spring.

Myanoung, like most of the towns along this portion of the river's course, stands on the right bank; for it is this right bank which is most protected against the river floods. At Myanoung, the present Delta is strictly at an end; but it may be said to extend to the cliff of Akouk-taung, which juts out into the river like the ram of a man-of-war, some miles farther north.

The cliff of Akouk-taung has an interest that corresponds to its very striking appearance. The name implies the "Customs Hill," and it is the universal tradition in Burma that in bygone, but still historic days, it marked the limit of the sea, and the point at which the Customs dues were levied. It stands three hundred feet out of the water, and its scarped face is riddled with caves, containing images of Gautama, the Buddha, and the members of the Sacred Order. Twice during the second war it was held in force by a grandson of Bandoola, and was carried by storm by the British troops. Here, under the massive ledges, the stream of the river runs very swiftly, and as we pass under it, the throbbing steamer makes slow pro-

gress. Buffaloes swimming across the swiftest part of the current are borne away like matchwood. Above Akouk-taung the river is flanked by hills on both its banks, and in the vista between lies Prome, a dark headland protruding into the waters.

SOLID-WHEELED COUNTRY CART IN THE DELTA

The city upon nearer approach presents an attractive appearance. Its green banks are shaded by an avenue of trees, each of which is a beautiful object in itself. A broad road with white railings runs parallel with the water—the King's highway from Rangoon to Prome. Behind it, through masses of green foliage, peep out the dark red roofs of European houses. The river, with no licence to spread its waters, flows here in one broad deep stream, full up from shore to shore. All along the west, the sky-line is broken by a range of hills, whose slopes are patterned by custard-apple orchards ranged with the regularity of the vine. As

the sun comes out from under the grey clouds, and shines on the ripples of the river, on the grassy slopes and spreading foliage, there is created an impression of indescribable cheeriness, and all that one looks upon promises well of the city.

CHAPTER XII

PROME

BETWEEN the river and the road is the little club of Prome, with its white tennis court outside, and its tables within, spread with pictures and papers from England. Once a week to this serene little island of European life there is brought the news of a greater world than is contained within the seas of Burma. Beyond it, on the ram that juts into the river, is the house of the District Magistrate. It is flanked by a lofty court-house, where all day long the business of empire is transacted ; the punishment of one, the lifting up of another, the assessment of revenue, the weighing of money in the treasury scales, the writing of those letters, those reports, those tabulated papers, whose turgid volume is slowly swallowing up the instinct of Imperial rule.

Overlooking the pleasant roadway stand, almost beyond recognition, the tree-clad remains of two gryphons that once marked the water-gate of the city ; emblems of a dead sovereignty. Beyond these, the river spreads out to a vast circular sheet of water, restrained only by the embankment, along which the highway runs. A few paces bring one to the bazaar,

that centre of life in every Eastern town. Outside, under the green boughs of the gold *mohur* and the *padouk*, there is a colony of large yellow umbrellas fixed in the soil, under which there sit the fruit and vegetable dealers, driving a brisk trade.

They love, these delightful souls, to sit out here in the fresh morning, and willingly take their chance of sun

"PEINGAW" SAILING UP STREAM

and rain. Laughter and joy are in the air, cheeriness is writ on the faces of the passers-by, there is colour in every detail. The scene is interesting by the hour. How different to its Indian fellow of the same name, in the happy laughter-loving note that brightens its life!

The great iron building which spreads its wings above the *al fresco* shops is more favoured by the dealers in silks and shawls, in Birmingham trinkets, and

the embroidered trappings of horses. For an iron building in the British style, it is not wholly bad; two quadrangles lie open to the sky, and they are full of shrubs and grasses; and, under the iron, the long aisles of stalls are tenanted by the prettiest girls of Prome. They come here in the early mornings one by one, and open their stalls, shaking their silks to the light, till the whole rich interior is filled with the shimmer of the beautiful fabric; with the glint of pink and green *pawas*, of gorgeous *gaungbaungs*, of

PROME

layers of many-hued *putsoes* ranged in order on the shelves, and coils of the soft raw silk, vivid and beautiful.

In the midst of this fairy-land of colour, the daughters of the city pass the day; here they sit and slumber, make ingenuous toilets before the world, gossip and play and flirt, and learn more of life and human

JACK FRUIT

nature than many more important people. They are gifted with the clearest vision; and there is no shrewder trader, no keener judge of character, no wittier person of her age and sex, than the maiden who sits here in a silken glamour, with *thanaka* on her face and a flower in her hair. And yet a stall here is seldom taken up as a purely business speculation. Its attraction lies

in this, that all men come sooner or later to the silk bazaar.

Outside, the roads are lined with rich avenues of trees, and houses, most of which are neat and attractive. Flowers are grown in front of the doorways; here a cluster of roses, there a line of pink and yellow balsams. In front of one house, making a cool green screen between it and the road, is a trellis work of posts, covered with the betel-vine. It is the house of Saya Pah, maker of the gold lacquer-ware for which his town is famed. It is lifted high on posts, and he meets me at the foot of his stairs, *shekoing* on his knees. I cannot discover any servility in the attitude or in the action as he performs it. It seems to me suggestive only of good manners. The old man, whose face is that of an artist, is clad only in a waist-cloth and is unashamed. Why should he be ashamed?

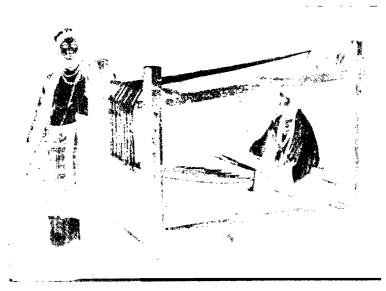
A DAUGHTER OF THE SOIL

His daughter, a pretty girl of sixteen, laughingly shakes hands—English fashion. Timidity and self-possession make a little battle in her face, but she is

a woman to her finger-tips, and her father's kneeling attitude throws no shadow on her self-respect. Upstairs, in the large living-room, with its bedsteads and mosquito curtains, Mah Pan, the wife of the Saya, meets us, a picture of what pretty girls in Burma come to; fat and round of face, with a calm eye and no illusions; dowager-like. There is no mystery in a Burmese house, and the Saya welcoming me within, takes me beyond this room into another, narrower but more cheerful, in which he works at his art. A Burmese harp, worked in with a graceful pattern in black and gold, is on the stocks, and beyond it there is a *karaweik* bird, glinting with fresh mosaic. The old man, stooping to show respect, explains that the body of the harp is cut from the *padouk* tree, and the curving bow of it from the *acacia catechu*. The sounding board is of varnished deer-skin, and the strings are of twisted silk. Tea-tables for European customers, and manuscript boxes illuminated with stories from the Zats, for use in the monasteries, are amongst the objects upon which the Saya lavishes his skill.

Beyond this simple *atelier*, there is a balcony decked with roses and open to the blue sky. High above it cluster the broad leaves of palm-trees, between whose dark boles there is framed a beautiful picture—the red roofs, and climbing spires, and great gold bulb of the Shway San Daw pagoda. It is here that the Saya, when he is resting from his labours, pays his devotions. It is a serene and beautiful oratory, in which any man might pray.

THE BURMESE HARP

The Saya is growing to be an old man now, and the things of the spirit are increasingly with him. One can see the change in his eyes, in the gentle inflexion of his voice, and in the subdued tones of the silken skirt he wears when he goes abroad. Fame has come to him in her devious way. She has brought

THE LOOM

him framed diplomas from exhibitions in Calcutta and Rangoon, which he hangs upon his walls. He is ready, he says, to take any orders the *thakin* may be pleased to give him. His wife, a practical soul, is more direct.

"What," she inquires, the betel trickling at her lips, "has His Worship come to buy?"

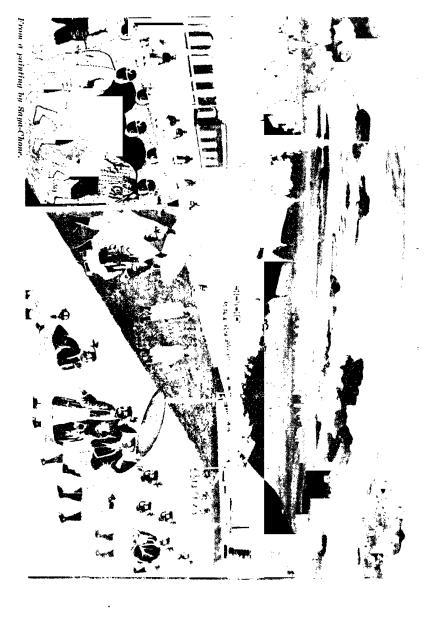
But there is no pressure, no solicitation; least of all any trace of that covert discourtesy with which British shopmen frighten sensitive people into purchasing goods they do not desire. These good people are well-bred in their way; there is a Viennese politeness about them: the Graben could do no better.

Some little way from Saya Pah's, in another quarter

BURMESE PAINTING
An abduction. Policeman to the rescue. The groom offers a bribe

of the town, I enter the house of a Kathé weaver, where, in the squalid gloom, rich patterns grow into beauty on the silken looms. It is not easy to distinguish between a Kathé and a Burman, but close observation reveals a difference, some elusive hint of race, rather than any marked difference of feature. Many generations ago, the ancestors of the Kathé were brought here, prisoners of war, to Burma, and

From a painting by Saya-Chone.

IN THE PALACE GARDENS, MANDALAY.

they are now of the soil. But they still talk the Manipur tongue, the language of their forefathers, and they employ a teacher of their own to teach their children how to write it. The old weaver who speaks is a taciturn and gloomy man, and the burden of his talk is of a decaying and unprofitable industry.

WOOD-CARVING

"Twenty years ago," he says, looking in the dust—"twenty years ago, I sold a hundred *putsoes* where now I sell ten."

He will vouchsafe no explanation; but he knows it is due to the competition of cheaper Western fabrics, and the passing away of the royal court.

It is a poor-looking quarter, this famous quarter

of the silk-weavers of Prome, and there is a whole street of Kathés. Seeing that they are of Hindu persuasion, it is no long way from them to the house of a Brahmin. The master is away at Rangoon; but his wife, a comely woman, receives me. She laughs, and says that if I am going to photograph her, she must go in and change her dress. Her husband keeps the school for the Manipuri children. She looks like a Burman, but states that she and her people keep to rules of caste, and only marry within the proper limits. Buddhism has, at least, taught her to come out from darkened chambers into the sunlight of life.

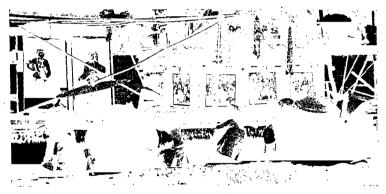
I go from her, to the house of a painter, and find him busy, with his assistants, over a large canvas, destined for a theatre. He does a considerable business in portraits, which he achieves by painting splendid backgrounds and fine clothes, and putting in for the face a photograph. This compromise is eminently satisfying to his customers, and it is certain that an air of reality is imparted to the photographs by their curious setting.

Burmese art is still in its infancy; but it has this of merit at least, that it is alive. A Burmese painter is quite prepared to grapple with any subject, from a sunset to a buffalo fight. Crude as his efforts are, it has always given me pleasure to come into contact with the Burmese painter. For he has the true spirit of the artist. He will come when you send for him to your house, clad in his best silk *putsoe* and whitest

muslin coat (his manners being the fine manners of his race), and he will *sheko*, and crouch down on the floor, and carry himself as if he had been brought up at court. His air will be one of the gravity that befits ceremonial occasions, and he will say *phaya* ("my lord") at the proper intervals. But gradually as the plan you put before him unfolds before his vision, a light will come into his eyes, a new pose into his stooping figure. He will enter enthusiastically into your proposals,

BURMESE ART: PLASTER WORK

and vow to accomplish a picture that will please you. He is always quite sure that he can do what is wanted, and that he can do it better than any of his contemporaries. And sometimes he will do it, and sometimes he will not (for the ardour cools); and nearly always you will have to wait a long time, and send him delicate reminders, before he will bring it to completion.

Perhaps the best painter in Burma is Saya Chone

A PICTURE SHOW

of Mandalay. He has painted several pictures for me, and upon all of them he has inscribed in gold the cryptic symbol "No. 1." I believe that he means it to refer to the excellence of his work. But the last time I saw my friend in Mandalay, he was gloomy and dejected. His ardour did not equal mine for the production of a picture of the Let-dwin-Mingala, that beautiful festival of the Kings of Burma, which took place once a year, when they went out in the spring-time with a pair of

white oxen in harness of gold, to plough a furrow outside the royal capital.

"You are not yourself, my friend," I said. "Is it not well with you?"

"It is ill with me," he answered. "Art does not pay. I will become a trader in rice."

And then he talked of the disinclination of people to buy pictures and pay for them, of the decline in Phôngyi-Byans (the monk-burnings), at which of old his pictures found a market.

"Now, rice, sir," he said, "is a much more profitable business; but the Let-dwin-Mingala is a good subject, and I will paint it for your honour."

Passing on by a neighbouring silversmith's, where dragons and elephants are shaping into form on the bulging sides of bowls and betel-boxes, I enter the Chinese quarter. Shoemakers are numerous here, and the produce of their toil is exported a long way from Prome. There is no creature on earth more industrious than the Chinese cobbler, and you will see him all over Burma, from dawn to midnight, in the gloom of his shop, a stooping yellow figure with awl and needle in hand, surrounded by a host of shoes. There are two joss-houses in Prome, representing the two sections of the Chinese community, those Long-coats and Short-coats who live apart and do not love each other. In one of these, a number of Chinese lads are at school, painting alphabets with laborious care and astonishing skill. No pen can compare for suppleness with the Chinese brush. A grey monolith within

the walls records, in letters of gold, the names and contributions of the builders of the temple. Its roofs and eaves are richly ornamented with figures of men and animals. The other joss-house is in a different style; double-storied, like a private house, and it opens on the street. Within, two men are lying on tables, lost in opium dreams; huddled figures unconscious of the world. A third, who is cheerily at work, plaiting a basket, makes me welcome. Upstairs there is an altar, and there are some fine paper lanterns, large enough to hide a man in. Adjoining this temple is a lofty building, the dwelling-house and place of business of the opium farmer.

A pleasanter spectacle awaits me at the house of a cigar-maker. A number of laughing girls stand outside, very daintily dressed, and the whole front of the house is scarlet with the tasselled hibiscus. Within, lie the materials for the day's work, the raw Indian tobacco, and the broad leaves in which it is to be wrapped. All the work is done by hand, and nearly every girl in Burma can roll a cigar. The indigenous article is a monster eight inches long, consisting of chopped wood, tobacco, molasses, and various herbs, wrapped in the silver-white skin of a bamboo; and so wide in diameter that it completely fills up the mouth of any young damsel who tries to smoke it. For presentation purposes, this long cheroot is often wrapped at one end in a coat of purple or gold paper. It accumulates a formidable mass of fire at the lighted end and requires some skill in the smoking. But the

Burman infant acquires this skill before he can walk, and while he is still at the breast. No one thinks of smoking such a cigar through. Two or three long puffs, the lips of the smoker thrust out to meet the circle of the cigar, and it is put down or passed on to some good fellow sitting by. This old-fashioned cheroot is gradually giving way to the cigar of rolled tobacco and the trifling cigarette.

THE REALISM OF THE BURMESE ARTIST

Blind Beggar and Carved Figure

Leaving now the thoroughfares of the town, I climb by red stairs and narrow lanes under the shelter of yellow-hearted *champaks* to the summit of the hill that dominates the city. Here half a century ago the British battalions were quartered; but traces of their occupation have all but passed away. Here on the camping grounds the red cattle now graze, the

partridge calls, and the hare finds a shelter for her young. The roadways are choked with tropical thickets! A great view spreads away, over the heads of the dark palmyras and dense woods, to the cloud-embattled horizon. The river, very broad, lies at one's feet, trailing away in the south to the spurs of the Pegu hills and the ram of Akouk-taung. One can look over the crest of the opposite hills, patterned with orchards, to the distant blue of the Aracan Yoma. A fresh air, of which there is no hint down among the tenements, blows about the summits, and one realises that here, if anywhere in Prome, is the place to live. The prospect is so cheerful and beautiful, that every one who comes to Prome should climb up here to look upon it. The traveller along the river levels, beautiful as they are, can form no idea of the world that expands from every one of the multitudinous peaks that crown the valley of the Irrawaddy.

Half-way down the hill on the further side, under the spreading boughs of a bombax, there is an open *zayat* which affords exquisite little glimpses of blue water and mountains. Here pious elders come to meditate, turning their rosaries by the hour. The Burman's love for nature is not to be learnt from his writings or his words; but from his choice of beautiful places like this, in which to pray and ponder on the transitoriness of life. On a neighbouring hill stands the most beautiful object in Prome, the Shway San Daw Pagoda.

There are four approaches to it, on the north,

ON THE PLATFORM OF THE SHWAY SAN DAW PAGODA.

south, east, and west; and each of these is of a hundred steps; but the most frequented of all is the northern approach. Here a pair of white gryphons tower above the road, and a stream of worshippers flows between them. Children, running naked, dive and splash in the open culvert, and thrust their heads from below through the open spaces between the planks, over which the good-humoured crowd passes on. Every one carries his shoes in his hands, and a notice over the archway requests "all but Europeans and Asiatic Englishmen" to remove the covering from their feet.

MANIPURI DANCERS

The long flight of pillars, in vermilion and gold, leads from the crouching gryphons to the last step and flagged pavement of the temple, making a vista of striking beauty; and up and down this avenue, lit with the slant rays of the sun, the worshippers pass with flowers in their hands, cheroots at their lips, and piety on their faces. Two lads with a clanging bell hung from a pole; children who can scarcely compass the width of the stairs; groups of laughing girls; old men trembling in their limbs—of such is the ascending and descending throng. Under the vermilion columns sit the beggars and lepers of Prome. Here is one, a woman hideously disfigured, with a child on her knees, whose face is yet unscarred by the fell disease. And there are others, upon whose faces there is the look of men to whom life has nothing left to offer. Intellect, will, hope, all have gone, and only the sad mortal disfigured husk remains. These poor creatures sit here, a piece of rag or a broken bowl spread before them, too weary of life to make any other appeal than that which is involved in their presence, to the passers-by.

On the platform all is beautiful. Under the *tazoung* at the summit of the stairs, a party of women is kneeling, their figures cut in dark outline against the blaze of gold beyond. All round the central fane, which towers eighty feet into the air, the worshippers are assembled: little children with flowers in their hands and faces solemn as they can make them; women in silken skirts bowing low before the object of their adoration; men, silently turning their beads, or praying with loud voices.

FIGURES OF THE BUDDHA

And up the long flight of eastern stairs there come, emerging suddenly into this world of sunlit splendour, growing girls with trays of pink balsams, heaped high upon their heads; and aged men in black and purple tartans, with white muslin fillets bound about their brows. To these last the long ascent is a work of real merit, for they are nearing the limits of life.

All here is gracious and beautiful; such a harmony of genuine piety and exterior beauty, as makes one's heart glad. There is no set worship, no shutting up within doors; neither gloom nor affectation. The men, the women, and the little children are genuinely happy in their devotions, and they worship here under the blue sky and in the golden sunlight, nearer in this than the rest of the praying world to heaven. In other lands where the fibre is strong and prone to excess, they would convert it all into priestcraft, or some mere secular cult of the beautiful; into some gloomy mystery or indecorous amusement. Here the simplicity, the natural piety, some gentle quality of equilibrium in the blood of this people, combined with an instinct that is profoundly artistic, enable them to effect a great compromise.

From the lofty platform of the pagoda, raised far above the neighbouring country, there expands one of those views which are the glory of Burma. The central chord of all is the great river, flowing in copper-coloured shade and silver light below the western bulwark of hills. Northwards it spreads out into a wide lake with the blush of evening on it, and beyond it, the soft green

hills are lit by the sunshine, free to roam over them; and the colouring is as tender as that of the hills beyond Florence as Turner saw them on a spring day from Fiesole. Eastwards, in the direction of the ancient city of Thare-Kettaya—long dead—spreads a lowland country rich with groves of tamarind and drooping palms, and rice-fields flooded with the rain.

The pagoda itself is a mass of gold, and the four-square platform, with an area of 12,000 feet, is set about with chapels richly carved, in which are countless figures of the Buddha in the three attitudes in which the great teacher is depicted. His features run the gamut of a face in contemplation, from sensual lips and the coarse profile that come from India, to the idealised being conceived by the artistic soul of the people. There are rows of bells, slung from wooden crossbeams and inscribed with pious texts and the names of those who gave them; there are masses of gold mosaic which coruscate in the sun, trees of red-gold bearing green and purple fruit, and at the eight points of the compass the symbols of the planets, depicted in gold on scarlet pillars.

An old blind beggar, crouching on the flagstones of the platform, looks up at the pagoda, and asks an alms with astonishing fervour and energy. You would not know that he was doing so, for he appears to be addressing the golden bulb before him. Protruding mobile lips, concentrated air, furrowed brow, stentorious voice—surely a very singular figure.

Worshippers passing by clang the bells with deer-

horns; in a remote side-chapel a woman and her pretty daughter, holding flowers in their hands, pray alone before a company of colossal Buddhas. The last rays of the setting sun fall on the red-gold fabric, wrapping it in a haze of glory; the fresh, rain-clear air blows amongst the little bells; trays of delicate pink flowers

MANIPURI ASTROLOGERS

on altars exhale faint odours; all is serene and strangely beautiful, here on this noble summit under the spaces of heaven.

It is little wonder they come up here to worship. Little wonder that they do not wish to change their faith, and all it means to them, for any other on earth.

As the stars come out, and the dusk of evening

overtakes me, I pass a procession on the way. A small lad swings manfully in front under a double burden of flowers, which fall in masses and sprays of pink and blue and yellow and white, and an old man follows behind in white muslin robes, beating a little triangular brass bell, and calling upon the people by the way to contribute their quota of flowers for the service of the pagoda. What could be more beautiful?

CHAPTER XIII

TO THAYETMYO

THE barrier of the hills facing Prome, which seem strung in a single line, opens out on a nearer view, and the main ridge is seen to recede a half-mile into the background. The interspace is made up of green glades and small streams, of fields of Indian corn, solitary palmyras, and splendid mango and teak. Red hamlets cluster about the edges of the river, and a monastery spire cleaves the air. In the background, the hilly slopes are covered with a maze of custard-apple orchards. The natural features are of marked beauty, and one reflects that in a civilised country this favoured spot would bear a famous name.

After Po U Daung, the opposite hills on the east take up the tale of beauty, and looking up-stream I can see the river in a narrow gap between blue head-lands. Passing through this defile, we come to Kama, with its white gryphons staring across the water. Later, the spectacle presented on the eastern shore is one of hill-slopes and grassy knolls of the liveliest green, splendid trees in bloom, falling curtains of creepers, river-grasses silver-tufted, and feathery bushes of the wild plum. Through this tempting world the

highway runs, its black railings in a line along the river, the telegraph wires overhead. Scattered palms and the roofs of a monastery proclaim the approach to the station of Palaw. Up north, a mountain spur comes down to the river's edge, and beyond this lies Thayetmyo,

KAMA

the old-time frontier-town of British Burma. Its white roofs glisten in the sun, and behind it a blue hill, twin to the nearer one, stretches away in a north-westerly direction.

I am now on the threshold of the "Dry Zone," and the picture is already changing from rain curtains and drifting squalls to opal clouds and the features of a laughing summer. The grassy glades that mark the river between Prome and Thayetmyo are a new feature in the landscape, and they afford a welcome relief to eyes weary of the wealth of unbroken forest. The grass covers the high red cliffs with a mantle like velvet, and falls in showers down the little gullies to

From a painting by Mrs. Otway Wheeler Cuffe.

KAMA,

RIGHT BANK OF THE IRRAWADDY, BETWEEN PROME AND THAYETMYO.

the water's edge. At Thayetmyo, I pass from all the gracious circumstances of Burmese life to a town born of half a century of foreign military tenure. The main street along the banks of the river is a low-type reproduction of an Indian bazaar; brick houses, built in execrable taste, flank it on either hand; natives of India flock in it, and the Burman here looks like a stranger in his own land. Stray pagodas, elbowed by court-houses and sentry boxes, reflect in their derelict appearance the change that has come over the settlement. It is in many ways a disagreeable metamorphosis; most of all, perhaps, in the warning it conveys of a

THE KAMA "NATS"

future, that to many seems inevitable, when all the gaiety and the charm, and the ease and plenty of Burmese life will be overlaid, if not annihilated, by the squalor and the indigent prose of an Indian proletariat.

Yet to do this new town of our creation justice, one must come away from the bazaar, from the company of the squalid Madrasi, the Hindu sweet-seller

and the Musulman pedlar, to the military cantonment of which all these are the parasites.

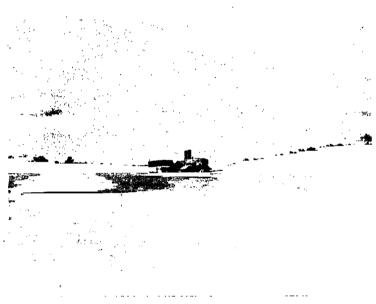
Here there are fair wide roads and splendid avenues, a fortress, a church, a racecourse and a polo-ground. White men in uniform, with little canes, come swinging down the roads; men from Essex, from Yorkshire, and from Enniskillen; bearded Sikhs from the Punjab, and ruddy Afridis from the Afghan border. Here of an afternoon the thunder of hoofs is heard on the polo-ground, the clang of the time-keeper's gong, the swish and click of stick and ball; and strong men lie panting on the grass in the intervals between the *chukkers*. In the evening, the bugles of England peal out in the alien air, and junior subalterns proclaim the health of "The King." "The King—God bless him."

To this extent, at least, there is compensation for the change that has come over the Burmese settlement.

There is compensation, and there is the price. Look at it. A stream flows through it, its flood having left the long grass stooping on its borders. Two black bridges cross it at each end. The place is more like some gloomy park, than what is associated in the mind with an English burial-ground. It is far away from the haunts of living men. There is no church here to bear the lone graves fellowship; no ivy-covered walls, no English flowers. It is the resting-place, you understand, of men who have died in an alien land. The price of empire.

Even here they lie, as they lived, with wide spaces round them. An acre or two is of little account in a

THE RIVER NEAR THAYETMYO, FOURTH DEFILE

waste of jungle. In one corner rest the mortal remains of the man who made the Aracan mountain-road, "worn out by exertions too great for his physical frame," in another is the tomb of one whose life closed early, an ensign of twenty-three. Not far off from him lies a young Englishwoman.

STEAMER WITH FLAT IN TOW COMING UP TO THAYETMYO

All is solitude, save where from a remote corner of the wide desolate place there comes a scent of incense. A party of Tamils, with lighted tapers placed on the tomb before them, is going through some strange litany. Here alone, amidst all these graves, is there one that is linked in any way with the living world about it. As to the rest—they lie for the most part forgotten;

the generation to which they belonged has passed away.

There is an irony in the one and only symptom of living remembrance, for it savours more of some half-savage rite than of a Christian ceremony. The flickering tapers, the burden of incense, the uncouth litany, only deepen the isolation of those other dead. What have they in common, but their common mortality?

SUNSET ON THE ARACAN HILLS

CHAPTER XIV

A SIDE ISSUE

SIRIUS and Aldebaran and chivalrous Orion glisten in the rain-washed sky. Venus hangs like a splendid jewel over the gateways of the dawn. At four o'clock all is dark, save the twinkling firmament overhead. At five, the dawn, blushing and beautiful, comes forth, and the stars pale, and the river quickens with swirling life.

THE MINDON ROAD

By this time I am well on the Mindon road; the grass a-twinkle with the dew, the thickets, far as my ear can reach, melodious with the matin-song of doves. It seems to me as if I have come upon the Spring and caught her unawares; Spring laughing and astray in the territories of Summer. Pale mists lie

in the valley of the river and along the skirts of the mountains, adding by their ethereal lightness to the spiritual beauty of the morning. Then the sun rises, making an arch of red-gold on the horizon, and in a little while, wide shafts of light are abroad in the green glades and on the barred highway. It is a beautiful road, laid out on the swelling uplands that gradually climb, broken by little valleys and rivers, to the threshold, and so to the summits of the Aracan Yoma. The outlines of the Yoma are visible from here, of that clarity, combined with softness, that is only attained in a country of distant horizons, after days of rain. Splendid trees and delicate grasses border the highway on either side: the great teak with her clustering flowers ruddy against the blue sky; the feathery palm, the versatile acacia.

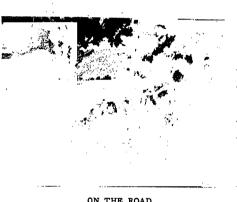
ON THE ROAD

At Nathé there is a rest-house on a hill, and a police post with a trifling stockade round it. But the guard-house of solid teak is interesting. The basement is a prison for malefactors on their way to be tried by a magistrate. It is constructed on the principle of a tiger's cage—two compartments, only one of which is open at the same

time. This makes a rush impossible. The upper story is reached by a ladder and a drawbridge. It is loop-holed, and furnished with handcuffs and leg-irons and rows of *dahs*. It is built on a knoll, half-surrounded by a stream which is crossed by a wooden bridge. A little way off, outside these entrenchments, is the palisade of huts in which live the wives and children of the guard. Across the road is their patch of Indian corn.

From here we go on over hill and dale till we come to Kyaukgyi. Behind me rides a Sikh trooper.

ON THE ROAD

"The Sikh," he complacently observes, "do great work for the Raj. They are brave men, ready to die; but they are quiet, orderly, obedient, and quarrel with no one. The Pathan also is a fine man, but turbulent and passionate; reckless in moments of anger."

Here are the two fundamental types of men. They have bravery in common; in all else they differ as the ardent Celt from the sober Teuton. Both have found a foreign master, and here, three thousand miles away from their native homes in the plain-lands of the Manjha, and the highlands of Tirah, they fight side by side for the glory of the empire, and help to keep its peace.

Splendid material—savage at the core—here they have become docile instruments of civilisation, panthers treading out the corn.

The Sikh is exclusive and mingles little with the people of the soil. Only a bad five per cent. marry the women here and are outcasted accordingly. The Mohammedans universally take wives. Many are settling down, mainly as cattle owners. Every Skih of the garrison at Mindon keeps a cow, and the milk, he will tell you, keeps him well. The instinct of the

A BURMESE PONY

pastoral Aryan is strong in the man from the Punjab. Butter and milk, these are the good things he craves after.

"In time, presence," observes the trooper, "all Burma will become like the Punjab." *Absit omen.*

At Kyaukgyi there is a rest-house on a hilltop

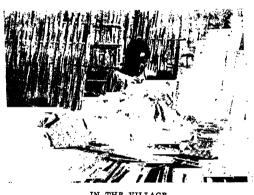
overlooking the fields of rice and the thatched roofs of the hamlet. A swift red stream flows past it, animated by rain that fell three days ago in the distant mountains. The country all around is broken, undulating, richly wooded; an amphitheatre surrounded by hills. It is a splendid summer day. Butterflies twinkle in the sunlight, wind-waves sweep over the young rice-fields, orioles flash golden wings as they speed from shade to shade; and the blue heaven is patterned with white clouds of restless beauty. The full tide of summer is here, yet the air is cool and the tropics manifest only in the vivid sunlight and the rich trappings of the world.

ON THE ROAD

It is true also that all the eye rests upon from here is fever-haunted; tainted with a subtle poison that enters in and destroys the blood, even as one is exulting in its beauty. The people are grateful for presents of quinine.

We leave Kyaukgyi at three in the afternoon, and two miles of travel bring us to the banks of the Pani river. I am making a dash for Mindon, a matter of some sixty miles, during a break in the rains. There are mountain streams to be crossed, there are no bridges. Six hours' rain can make them impassable,

and three weeks can pass without any break in the barrier of waters. So I come to the Pani with some qualms.

There is a monastery in a tamarind grove overlooking the river, and monks and scholars come out to the carved railings to see us ride by. The Pani, red and heavy with silt, is flowing swiftly on its way. Although not in full flood, it is too deep to be forded, and there is no passage for carts, which would merely be swept away. So we cross over in a small flat-bottomed boat, with the saddles, rifles, and trappings, while the horses are led a little way higher up the river. Man and horse plunge in and are instantly carried off their feet. The stream bears them rapidly down, till they succeed in landing on the farther shore, some distance from where they started. Immediately the horses are ashore they fall to cropping the soft grass, having apparently enjoyed the plunge into the water.

IN THE VILLAGE

As we go on the road grows worse, and so grows admiration for the little beasts that carry us. They plunge bravely through the heaviest slush, often to their knees in its grip, and my feet dip in the thick

liquor and become coated with it. In the dark they pick their way with equal skill and resolution. It is here amidst the difficulties of his own country that one comes to love and appreciate the Burmese pony. Little more than twelve hands in height, he will carry a strong man fifty miles in a day; put into a four-wheeled cab, he will dash off with it, regardless of its burden of half a dozen occupants; turned out to grass after a long day's march, he will cheerfully find himself his food, and accept with lively approval the handful of bamboo leaves you may give him; of grooming he takes little; and for sheer pluck, intelligence, vivacity, and an iron mouth he beats creation.

ON THE ROAD

Presently we come upon the cart containing the advance baggage stuck deep in the mire and unable to proceed. It is not for any lack of spirit in the little beasts that are harnessed to it, for small though they are, scarcely bigger than big dogs, the cattle in this district are extremely well-bred, very handsome, and full of pluck and endurance. One of the little cattle is half buried in the slush, and his legs are entirely hidden. The yoke presses heavily upon his neck, and he is in sore straits. The cart is slowly unladen of

all its burden, the driver stands up and calls to his cattle by name. They make a splendid, frantic effort, go down on their knees, recover, and so come panting out of the slough in which they have been all but entombed. Such is the Burman unmetalled highway at this season, after three days of fine weather.

THE VILLAGE

After tea, partaken of under the shelter of a village stockade, I set out again, leaving the cart to follow. The darkness comes very swiftly after the sun has set. Happily, the moon is nearly full.

Ye-gyan-zin lies high on a ridge of hills, the watershed between the valleys of the Mahtoon and the Pani,

and to Ye-gyan-zin we climb. The road is bad in places, running into and along the beds of streams; but much of it lies through waving grasses and rich forest, bathed in the moonlight.

From the rest-house at Ye-gyan-zin one gets a glimpse into the true life of these wild and sparsely inhabited countries. There is scarcely a breath of air stirring, but the night is resonant with the cheep of crickets, and there is a wide view over hilly tracts to the blue outline of the Yoma and the white moonlit clouds beyond. A pony tethered here was carried off by a tiger a few days ago; a Chin was killed in the early dawn as he went out to his fields. Night after night there is the same stillness; the pageantry of the hours unfolds itself; dawn and noon and evening follow incessant on each other's footsteps; as they have done all through the incalculable years. Here is something of the romance of the primeval country; wide spaces are visible from here, which no human being has yet brought under dominion.

LOOKING DOWN ON THE VALLEY OF THE MAHTOON

Nature, romantic and terrible, confronts one; and the civilised man sojourning here for a night feels himself

THE VALLEY OF THE MAHTOON

an alien of the moment, standing upon the brink of vast and awful arcana.

Half an hour before the dawn I wake to find all the mists of the night gathered in, like a white sea, in the valley of the Mahtoon. The clear blue hills rise up about them as if to protect them in their secluded home. The full moon, gathering splendour from the growing dawn hangs above the crest of the western hills. The first waves of light come streaming over

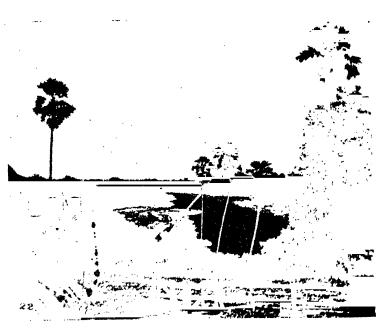
the world as we start, and for a long while we ride in silence in the company of the morning.

Even in an old world, in the midst of prosaic and commonplace surroundings, the spirit of youth is seldom absent from this first hour of the day; but here in the heart of a country of primeval forests, secret streams, and sunlit glades, in a world still all but virgin to man, it thrills with extraordinary joy.

LONG-BOAT ON THE MAHTOON RIVER

Even the stolid Sikh behind me, the man of milk and butter, is moved by it. "Lo!" he says, thrusting forth his hands, "lo! how the morning spreads herself abroad."

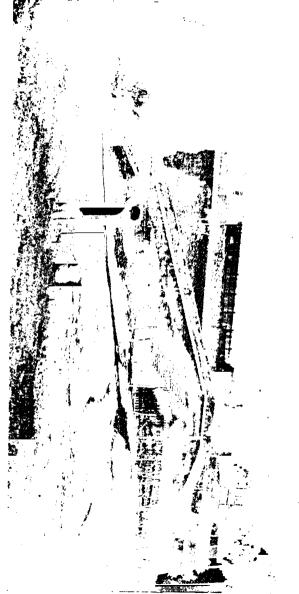
The road follows the spine of the hill, and such roads in a mountain country never fail to attract the traveller upon them. This one is no exception to the rule. It winds through grass-lands bordered by dense forest, and it looks as though a giant's plough had passed over it, making this single furrow over the mountains. Every blade of the tangled myriads is sown with dewdrops. Noble vistas unfold on either hand; wide hillsides bathed in sunlight; patterned aisles of teak, and swooning avenues of cane; and last of all, most beautiful to a human eye, the silver loops of the Mahtoon river, in the far populous valley below.

CLOUDS ON THE MAHTOON RIVER

AT MINDON

Leaving the crest at last, the road plunges into pools and rivulets, and gloomy halls of forest blind to the sun, and so comes to the red roofs and palm-clusters of a Burmese hamlet. The spires of Mindon gleam across the river, which we cross in a ferry-boat.

It is the river that accounts here for the presence of man. Its valley levels yield him food, its waters are a link for him with the outer world. But for the Mahtoon, the burden-bearer, all that the eye looks upon now from the hilltops of Ye-gyan-zin, finding it good because it is human, might still have remained a pathless wilderness. Upon a day in the misty past,

a man, one can fancy, stricken with a new desire, and tired of the Great River along which his progenitors had come, took the turning up the mouth of the Mahtoon, until he came with his people after many vicissitudes to anchor at Mindon under the shadow of the western hills. And so the townlet came into being. But Mindon has not increased under British rule. A Burmese under-magistrate presides over the township, and a small guard of military police, constantly changed because of the malaria, protects it against aggression from the mountain Chins. But in former times it was the seat of government of a *wun* or Provincial Governor, and it gave to King Mindon Min his territorial title.

It is a long day's journey by boat down-river to the Irrawaddy. The scenery along the route is of great beauty. Large quantities of the produce of the fertile valley of the Mahtoon are sent down to Kama upon rafts of bamboo. The current after rain is very swift, and where it enters the Irrawaddy there is a violent impact, fraught with grave danger to boats. At Natmauk, where a great cliff abuts upon its waters, the spirit of King Mindon is believed by the people to have taken up his abode.

THE FORT AT MINHLA

CHAPTER XV

TO MINBU

ACROSS the river, and facing Thayetmyo, is the small town of Allanmyo. It owes its name to Major Grant Allan, who demarcated the old frontier between Upper and Lower Burma in 1853. Frontiers have a tendency to follow the natural features of the land; but this one—it has ceased now to be of any importance—runs with an uncompromising directness across Burma from east to west. And the tale is that when the imperious Dalhousie saw no prospect of getting the Court of Burma to recognise the British occupation of Pegu, he ruled a line across the map, and ordered the frontier to be delimited accordingly. White pillars half buried in the jungle still survive in memory of his fiat. Allanmyo, like its name, is a product of British rule. In the king's days Meaday, facing it on the Thayetmyo side of the river, was the centre of life. "At noon," wrote Symes, in the narrative of his Embassy to Ava in 1795—"at noon we reached Meaday, the personal estate of the Maywoon of Pegue, who is oftener called from this place Meaday Prae or Lord of Meaday, than by the viceroyal titles. Here in compliance with the wishes of the Maywoon,

we proposed staying some days. During our stay, I made short excursions to different parts of the country, and found little variation in its appearance; it was very beautiful, though but half-cultivated, and I was everywhere treated with respect."

At Sinbaung-we there is a large island mentioned

THE LAUNCH AT ANCHOR

both by Symes and Yule. A short distance above it is Longyi-ua, and the people relate that a king's boat was once caught in the whirlpool near this island, and that it had to be pulled ashore by the villagers with a rope made of their *longyis* or silken kilts.

Just before coming to Sinbaung-we, there is a cluster of white pagodas on the west bank, and a little village

THE RIVER ABOVE THAYETMYO

on the low undulating ground between the river and the hills. Opposite this village there is a beautiful wooded tributary, which comes winding its way from the remote heart of the country. Plantain orchards and palmyra groves; park-like trees; armies of silver-headed river-grass, pink when ruffled by the wind (sign of a falling river); dark ruins of old pagodas; wild plum hedges; banners of *tagôn-daings*; the gold of new *htis* on white pagodas; red-striped cliffs rising sheer from the water, with gaps at intervals, showing in perspective wooded hollows and grassy knolls which tempt the river traveller to step ashore and make a nearer acquaintance—of such is the world compact, at this portion of the river's course.

At Mijaung-yay (Crocodile Water) there are white pagodas and red houses in a line, and a road from here leads over the rolling uplands to the old walled city of Taung-dwin-gyi, under the flanks of the Pegu Yoma. Sudden squalls overtake us at this season of mid-September; first a purple bank coming up from the south; then a yellow mist, and the driving swish of rain. The river, turbulent one moment, is quiet again the next. The sun shines in splendid patches on the green hills, while the purple storm is still on its way.

At Malun, an eminence crowned with white stairs and pagodas, there is a cenotaph in memory of the famous Bandoola. Here, in its neighbourhood, at Minhla, the Burmese army made its only attempt to stay the final British advance in 1885.

The fort at Minhla stands above the edge of the

water, and if ever the [illegible] a frail defence for a nation to rest its hopes upon, it is this. Four-square and of plastered brick, it can boast neither of ditch nor bastion, nor of any of the other devices that help a fortress to defend itself. Its walls slope inwards, so that its area at the top is smaller than at its base. It has double walls with earth between, and low-arched gateways. A series of vaulted rooms lines the inner courtyard, and a double flight of stairs leads up north and south to the level of the ramparts. If ever there was a rat-hole, it is this, and it proved true to its character when our troops carried it and slew the defenders cooped up within. "The Madras scouts," I read in a narrative of the war, "fell back on their supports, by a movement which was unfairly attributed to want of steadiness; the European officers raced for the stockades, on the further side of which they saw the Victoria Cross. They rushed up the high and narrow ramp, which was defended by a cannon. The piece was fired off over their heads, and in an instant they and some thirty or forty men entered the fort and shot down the Burmese. Panic-stricken, most of these fell on their knees and asked for mercy. The *woon* ran out at the further gate and escaped. Eighty Burmese were slain in the fort, and several officers were severely wounded."

This place, once a shambles, is now become a bazaar crowded with the stalls of those who trade in beans and pumpkins. It holds also a few stalls in which silk and cotton goods are sold.

From a painting by Mrs. Otway Wheeler Cuffe.

MINHLA,
BETWEEN THAYETMYO AND MINBU.

On the far side of the river there is another and a stronger fort, built upon a lofty cliff, but so well concealed that one might pass up and down the river a hundred times without suspecting its existence. It is approached through the little village of Gwe-Gyaung—in at one creeper-covered gate of its stockade and out at the other—and by way of a lane bordered by hedges of *kanakho* and the *say-galon*, which has a blossom of pink and carmine petals with speckled interior and one long streak of rich yellow down its back. Practically the whole of the fortress is under ground. It was constructed by the Italian engineers of the king, who declared it to be impregnable, but it made no resistance. The river below it makes a great bow from north to south, and lofty hills make a chain across the west. Under the eastern cliffs, the river runs into little wooded caves and sheltered bays, which are like a miniature Riviera. Volcanic Popa looms up faintly on the northern horizon.

The Headman of Gwe-Gyaung, an old gentleman of frank and perfect manners, discourses on the war. "When the English were as far away as that little boat," he says, pointing to a canoe on the water half a mile away, "the shot from our guns fell short of their steamers, but *their* shot, when they fired, lodged upon yon distant hillock," pointing to a spot some two miles inland. "What, *thakin*, could the Burmese do in the circumstances? Ka-maw-hta, the Italian, meant to fight the English Min, but U-Gaung, the Kinwun Mingyi, sent word to the soldiers not to fight, because

the two princes, the Nyaung-Oke and the Nyaung-Yan, who were with the British Government, were coming up, and we were to have one of them for king. As to Minhla, they fought there because the Bo Cha was there, a brave man in command; a brave man, your honour."

Below the fort, by the side of the pathway, there is a *nat*-house sacred to Thagya-Thamee, a little lady like a doll who lives within. The house is like a dovecot, and a shed is built over it to give protection from the weather. She is a benevolent creature, and people come here to worship, because, as the Headman observes, it has been the custom for generations to do so. Orchards of mangoes, limes, and custard-apples surround the village, and a few small boats are tethered by the river's edge. The receding waters leave rich meadows under the cliffs, and upon these and on the grassy slopes under the fort the red cattle find ample pasturage. It is a serene and beautiful spot, not meant for war.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIVER IN ACTION

IN its flood season the river is subject to sudden gusts of passion. The current above Minhla runs with great violence, and when the river is up, the traveller in a country boat or a small launch is like to have strange experiences.

After leaving Minhla in a small launch, I came to anchor one night under the village of Myingun. Overhead a few pale stars were faintly visible; a wind on the lee shore made a lapping like that of the sea; the dark river swirled by, laden with driftwood brought by the heavy rain; and the passing derelicts ground against the sides of the launch with sinister music. All night long the river swept down with its derelicts, its level rising with each hour; and every time I looked out into the dark I could see them coming like raiders of the night. At last there came a ship from the vastness upon us. A lascar in a startled voice called out:

"Allah! A ship goes by. Whose can it be?"

The Serang sleepily murmured: "No ship, but a tree let loose."

"Tree?" said the other, awe in his voice; "look at it."

We crowded under the white awnings to see a great *hnau* floating swiftly down, shadowy, unhelmed, no lights upon her, a ship of the dead. We were still wondering when a great crash shook the air. The pity of it came upon us, for a great *hnau* with her rich carved stern, her vast rigging and shapely bows, makes

ON THE RIVER

a noble spectacle upon the water. She passed within a fathom's sweep, and must have rammed us, had we not anchored for the night in the shelter of a rocky ledge, protruding a few feet into the river. We crept a foot nearer in to the bank and put a fresh rope out. The anchor offered no security, and had we held by it, the current must have lifted it and swept us away. So it lay with a slack chain at the bottom, where it collected large quantities of drift during the night.

All through the night the rain fell, and the river rose,

PAGODAS ON THE RIVER

and the dawn broke grey and wet. Hills, in the mist, seemed scarcely real, and within the full sweep of the eye, all was grey, boundless flood; every boat and figure on its surface stood out black against the grey, as if it were cut in paper silhouette.

We had some trouble in getting away, for both screw and anchor were encumbered with the *débris* of the flood, and the instant we let go, the current began to sweep the launch down. For a few exciting moments, full steam ahead made no progress. She was slowly but certainly drifting down to the rocky headland on which the *hnau* had broken. It was a struggle between steam and tide, and the betting was in favour of the tide. Happily the launch at last made way, slowly she mastered the current, and steamed out of danger into mid-stream. It was a singular spectacle that now met my eyes; for that same river, which can at will simulate an immortal calm, or break into passionate wrath; which can look like a molten sea under the full blaze of the noon, or become like some rapturous instrument upon which, after the sun has set, every emotion of colour throbs; can in the grey dawn of such a morning veil itself in an inscrutable mystery. Every feature of it takes on a new and strange complexion. In the vague light, distant islands and promontories become transfigured. Trees loom up above the belt of waters as though they had no roots. The flat sands disappear, and headlands shoot out into the air, 'twixt sky and water. Sailing boats, fickle as any mob, sweep down with their banner sails in the van of the northern

winds. Seen against the pale sky of the morning, their outlines make startling patterns, as of some mystic procession trailing away to a mute and shadowy world. In such company one comes in mid-September to Minbu.

CHAPTER XVII

MUD VOLCANOES

MINBU is notable for its mud volcanoes. They own a small territory between the Sabwet-chaung and the metalled road behind Minbu, and for the most part they adhere to these limits. But they have been known after heavy rain, which excites them, to flow in a great sluggish deluge over the road, and a portion of their overflow streams into the Sabwet-chaung. They consist of one lofty central cone, rugged and broken in outline; several, either closed or on the point of becoming so; and two open baths of liquid mud. A light is said to ignite the gases that escape and the oil that may be skimmed from their pools. There are in addition many miniatures of these three types.

The volcano begins as a little bubble of liquid mud, and gradually builds for itself a cone, on the completion of which its existence appears to terminate. In the case of the large central member of the group, however, the uprising fluid has burst its way through the walls of the crater, reproducing as nearly as possible the features of a true volcano. There is about them all a mean and clammy character, which makes the re-

semblance *bizarre*, as though they were of kin, but the product of another and an inferior world. The stuff they exude is slate-coloured, cold, and malodorous. When it dries, it turns a yellow-brown, and the mud-volcano in decay is more like an ant-heap than any other thing on earth. If you climb to the top of the central peak, you will find a circular pool of this ill-looking mixture, contained within jagged walls, which are broken through at one point. This pool is for an instant still. It then quickens with sudden impulse, and the whole mass shivers, as though some life engulfed in it were seeking for a means of escape. An instant later a dome of grey matter is created from the surface. There is an upward push and a rupture. Air escapes, and the upheaved liquid flops back in a large circle. This process is repeated in various forms, sometimes as a small quick upheaval in a double circle, which makes a soft squelch, without ever getting to the point of rupture, as though the motive power within were exhausted; at others in a great dome which flings up the grey matter into the air with a violent effort, and sends a large overspill into the trough which lies in the gap of the crater.

This trough widens as it follows the downward slope, from a few inches to several feet, and it is curiously fascinating to trace the progress of the sluggish stream, slimy and glistening in the sunlight, till it ceases to move, or is lost in one of the deep gullies that bear away to the river. The tendency of this stream is to raise its bed until it is several inches higher than the

surrounding soil. After some time the crater breaks at some other point in its circumference, and the original stream, no longer reinforced, quickly dries and cracks in the sun, making a series of transverse lines, like those of a ladder, down its length. A number of these defunct streams clothe the slopes of the volcano, dividing them into a pattern of tortuous ribbons. An unbroken volcano is not less interesting. Its shape is that of an elongated and rounded cone, and a small stream ejected from an orifice at its top spreads a fresh glaze from moment to moment on its surface.

The depths of these pools is greater than at first sight seems probable. Into one of them—a little bubbling circle less than four inches in diameter—a long thick sapling will find its way to a depth of six feet. The principal crater probably has a depth of fifty feet, and it provides a very dingy and terrible *oubliette* into which to fall. Stories are current of people who have fallen in, from losing their balance. One realises for the first time, with something of a shock, that a small pool scarcely bigger on its surface than a watch is deep enough to hold a man, and it might be supposed that there would be danger in the case of the larger pools of the outer husk tumbling in under pressure; but no accidents appear to have been ever due to this cause. Sightseers constantly climb to the very lips of the craters, and herds of cattle drift across the volcanoes, wandering over their slopes, without suffering any greater harm than a sudden immersion up to their knees in one of the moving streams of grey matter.

The people of the country-side attach a mysterious character to the volcanoes. A fabulous snake is said to be imprisoned within, and a house has been built in the vicinity for the tutelary *nat.* Nervous people do not willingly pass by his territories at night. And it must be admitted that they have a disagreeable character. No more secret grave for a murdered man could well be found. No blade of grass grows anywhere within their sinister neighbourhood. All power of reproducing life seems to have been crushed out of this grey clay, and even at the height of the tropical year, when life strains upwards from the soil and all things that come within the compass of the eye are clothed in verdure, it spreads, devoid of every symptom of life, broken and furrowed only by the rain, like a cold blister on the smiling face of the world. The volcanoes owe their existence, it seems, to petroleum springs below the surface.

CHAPTER XVIII

TO YENAN-GYAUNG

ON the way to Yenan-Gyaung the river races and swirls under the high cliffs so furiously, that often a launch at her greatest speed can make no progress. The cliffs are of a worn and romantic beauty, the home of sand-martins which fly and circle unceasingly in the light; of secret orioles; of a gracious and tender-hued acacia; of pink and crimson convolvuli, which trail like a rich carpet from the window of a rejoicing citizen; and of groups of trees with twisted white trunks and wind-driven foliage, like Roman pines, where they cluster on the cliff tops. There is no note of the tropics in this scene. The full bounty of the season does no more than to keep it green; and in the dry weather all is parched and arid as the desert.

I come upon the village of Gya, built upon the green slope of a hill, a smiling interlude in the great procession of the cliffs. It overlooks a sheltered cove, which is made by the arrival here of a freshet; a brawling and turbulent creature for brief moments of its life, but commonly moribund or dry. Like all of its kind, it has marked out for itself a territory far greater than it can fill.

The cliffs of soft sandy formation show in an interesting manner how the action of rain supplements that of the great river in widening its borders. The action of miniature falls is here well marked, the cliff

CLIFFS NEAR YENAN-GYAUNG

sides being cut into pinnacles which look like stalactites. The whole surface is scoured with the prints of water. In places the cliffs look as if they had been sliced with a razor, in others as if the whole front of them had been brutally torn away, as a bear tears away the flesh from a man's face, exposing the grinning bones. One talks of human interest, but the war of nature is of terrible fascination when the eye has once learnt to look for it.

This is the order of the landscape here where it overlooks the swirling river—cliff, watercourse, cliff, watercourse, cliff, large watercourse, a village; and so again. It is only where the large streams come down that there is space for a settlement. There are no

villages in Burma more charmingly placed than these that lie transverse to the river, between Minbu and Yenan-Gyaung. And many of the patches of swelling down and trees in cluster on the eastern bank are English in their suggestion. One might suppose, as one goes by, that some skilled gardener had been at work here, preparing a park for an English gentleman.

Yenan-Gyaung as I approach it is like every other village here in its natural site, but on a greater scale; and distinguished, since it is a town, by white and gold

CLIFFS

pinnacles of pagodas and dark monastery spires; and by serried lines of long-boats and white flats under the clifts, where the oil steamers call. The river is mightily spread out here, and looks at sunset like a purple sea.

(1) EARTH-OIL

Yenan-Gyaung, "the river of stinking water," seems to have lost its odour. None at any rate assails me when we anchor for the night in the company of a number of Burmese *peingaws*, under the village. The last sound I hear is that of an old man's voice, chanting from a religious work, inculcating the practice of many virtues. In the early morning I ride on to the oil-fields. The road after crossing the dry sandy bed of the creek, pitted with water-holes dug by the people, climbs up to a plateau, along which it winds for a couple of miles. The soil is meagre and barren, though at the right season happily clothed with green grasses and small acacias. A wide expanse of rolling country, scarred and broken up by deep ravines, spreads away on every hand, save on the west, where the Irrawaddy lies in a long silver trough bounded by wide plains and distant mountains. It is a country that in the midsummer heats, before the rain has fallen, is wholly devoid of beauty.

The most prominent feature in the landscape, as I approach the wells, are the lofty, spider-like derricks which crown the knolls and make strange patterns against the sky, as if they were the skeletons of some extinct settlement. Under these, and scarcely visible above the soil, are the primitive works of the Burmans. Each well is marked by a splash of dark stained earth made by the refuse and wastage of the oil. These, and the patches of the purple croton, give the hill-slopes a

singular blistered look, that is in harmony with their arid character. Red drums of oil like gas tanks, clusters of thatched huts in which the work-people

PAGODAS AT YENAN-GYAUNG

live, the wider roofs of the European houses, the dark tapering spires of a monastery, and the cupola of a white pagoda complete the picture. In the fenced yard of the superintendent, there is a flower garden, gorgeous with scarlet and yellow canna and purple convolvuli; the only patch of lively colour on the brown slopes.

The superintendent, an American, with clear blue eyes, a soft lazy drawl, and a loud, frank, explosive laugh, shows me round.

"Wal," he says, "thar ain't much to see around here; but I guess you're welcome to see what thar is."

We begin at the forge, where a motor pants in a side room, and blacksmiths are at work on bars of red-hot iron; and from here pass on to a derrick where another American, in a large mushroom hat that helps to keep off the oil-drippings, is at work on the boring of a well.

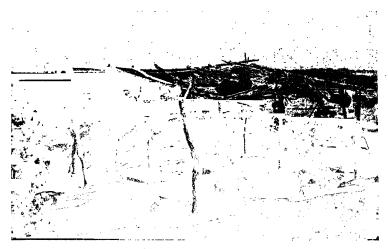
The boring implement is a gigantic crow-bar, which bores its way down by force of its own weight as it falls. A steel cylinder with a simple valve scoops into itself the slush and clay in the tube made by the drill, and disgorges these outside the well. A big windlass wound with rope works the drill, lifting it up and letting it fall; and it is itself worked by an engine in a neighbouring shed. The oil spouts up from time to time in a jet which reaches high above the mouth of the well, and covers the derrick with an evil-smelling filthy coat, which drips long after the jet has ceased, turning all the surrounding area into a puddle of mud and oil. In this environment the coolies work, and the overseer stands, an elfish man, covered with dripping oil. The coolies wear small basket hats, and little besides.

This process continues till the full depth of the well, some seventeen hundred feet, is reached.

The oil is pumped out by steam engines, or it comes up of itself driven by the pressure of gas below. In the latter case, when the stop-cock at the well's mouth is turned on, the gas rushes out with a roaring, grinding sound and is quickly followed by a stream of yellow brown oil, which foams out of the pipe into an iron

YENAN-GYAUNG

tank, where it lies covered with iridescent bubbles and gradually thickens as it cools. Part of it is burnt as fuel in the engines, where it makes a raging flame like a sword of fire.

The Burmese system is yet simpler. A well is dug to a depth of from two to three hundred feet, and lined with wood to keep the sides from falling in. Looking

THE BURMESE SYSTEM

down into its deeps, I can see the oil glinting at the bottom, and quivering with the secret action of the springs; overhead, at a height of four or five feet, a tree trunk to which pulleys are attached is placed horizontally on supports. A rope is passed over the pulleys and hauled by girls and men, down a long slope, till the bucket of oil reaches the surface. Human labour from start to finish. The contents of each bucket are poured into large Ali Baba jars, which lie half-

embedded in the dark slush at the well's mouth. These girls get fourpence a day for their toil, and they prefer the hard labour of it to more lucrative employment, "because they can flirt here all day long." "Only girls in search of husbands go to Yenan-Gyaung," is the envious comment of the women along the river, to whom such opportunities are denied.

The Burmese process is literally the same to-day as it has been for generations, with one single exception. They have found an air-pump and a diver's helmet useful for the digger, and these may be seen here and there in use.

The diggers are better paid than any one else in Yenan-Gyaung. They get one rupee (1*s.* 4*d.*) a day for their toil, and would prosper accordingly if they could be persuaded to work when they had some earnings in hand. Diggers are no longer brought up *in articulo mortis*, their tongues lolling out of their mouths; but their calling still claims an occasional victim. Only the other day a digger on his way up from the pit lost his hold of the rope and was killed; and the party of rope-pullers found themselves on their backs on the towing path. The Burmese well is by preference always on a slope, where a good towing path can be found, leading away at times down to the very bed of the ravine. One can measure the depth of a well from the length of the towing path, for they are exactly equal. From the heaving centre of the wire suspension bridge which spans the biggest of the ravines, there is a curious view of these wells, on little

HAULING

ledges protruding from the slopes, each with its dark circle of oi y refuse and its winding path beaten white by the feet of the towers.

But it is at the receiving station, where the Burmese output of oil is measured and taken over by the company's agents, that the *bizarre* character of Yenan-Gyaung becomes intense. The inner space, where these operations are gone through, is surrounded by a wide circle of black, greasy pitch, an amalgam of oil and mud, stamped with the footprints and the hoof-marks of men and cattle, and crowded with carts full of glistening jars of oil. Beside them are the great

Ali-Baba-like vats, agape and half-buried in the mire. The suggestion is one of some infernal kraal.

Making my way through this outer barrier, whose oily filth is far from inviting, I find myself within the inner circle, set round with lofty sheds which face inwards, like the seats of an amphitheatre. The platforms of the sheds are crowded with the strenuous naked figures of men employed in pouring oil from jars into iron reservoirs. The oil pours in a green, glutinous stream; the sun glints on the polished muscles of the toilers; above in long rows on the topmost tiers sit the Indian supervisors and tally-clerks, in white robes, silent and taciturn. The stairs of the platforms are slippery with oil, and all the arena is alive with the moving figures of the oil-bearers, hastening up with their quota. They look like demons from some under-world, rather than human beings; they look least of all like the happy people of the soil who elsewhere go to and fro in silken skirts to worship at some golden pagoda, lifted high above a world of beauty. Some strange metamorphosis has overtaken them here. And as I look I am reminded of the pictures that prophetic writers draw of the Industrial Future.

For here are the debased workers, unhuman in appearance; supervisors over them of another race, silent but ready to intervene should a scuffle or riot take place among them; and over all the shadow of the Colossus of Capital, into whose maw the toil of the under-workers runs. They are made to sell here

YENAN-GYAUNG FROM THE RIVER

to the company all they produce, at the rate of 2 rupees 8 annas a hundred viss, and the company's selling price is 6 rupees for the same quantity. Capital and cool intellect have been busy these years amongst the ancient owners of the wells; judicious loans have swept nearly all of them into the Capitalists' grip, and the Twin-sa, the hereditary "Well-Eater," trembles under his little finger, because he knows that his mortgages are overdue and foreclosure must crush him. He is glad enough to get the company's price for his oil.

"Wal," comes a lazy humorous voice, "seems to me you have seen pretty near all thar is to see in this here God-forsaken place. Come away home now and have a drink. I guess there is some champagne going still of the stuff the old man sent along to drink success to our new four-hundred-bar'l well."

(2) THE LEGEND OF YENAN-GYAUNG

"Once upon a time," according to the story-teller, "the stinking water of Yenan-Gyaung was sweet, and of such fragrant odour, that all the world voyaged there to take away a little of it. For centuries the people came and went, the waters retained their magic property, and Kyaukka-Myo, as the old city was called, prospered by the influx of the strangers. Till one day, there came up the river a great king in a golden raft, with his queens and his courtiers and an army of eighty thousand men. And when they got near the city, seven

of the queens, very weary of their golden raft, asked the king's leave to step on shore and take a stroll. The king consented, but said that they must be sure not to stay away very long. And no doubt they would have returned in good time, had they not come upon the pool of fragrant water for which Kyaukka-Myo was famous.

FROM THE CLIFFS OF YENAN-GYAUNG

" But its odour stole upon their senses and they forgot all about their promise to the king. When the night came and the king found they had not yet returned, he set out in search of them, and when towards the morning he found them by the scented waters of Yenathasi, he fell into a great passion and commanded them instantly to be killed. After a time the king's anger passed away, and then he blamed the Yenathasi for prompting him to commit this crime. He therefore

resolved that the water should be sweet-scented no more, and by the aid of the miraculous powers which he possessed, changed the perfume to the stench of earth-oil. From that day forth, the place has been known as Ye-nan-kyaung—the river of stinking water."

This legend, with variations, is played to audiences at Yenan-Gyaung by the amateur players of the town. It has a practical moral in the testimony it bears to the oil-rights of the local families, which, as the play runs, had to be defined by the great king, before his golden raft could be induced to resume its journey. These rights, now fading away under the pressure of modern causes, present a somewhat curious illustration of the tendency common in all lands and amongst all people to keep wealth "in the family."

(3) THE CLIFFS

At Yenan-Gyaung one may make a nearer acquaintance with those cliffs which are so striking a feature of the river in the dry region. Wholly distinct as they are from the mountains, which by their fellowship with the Irrawaddy give it much of its romantic character, they are not lacking in beauty of their own; and indeed they offer a welcome relief from the tropical exuberance which so perpetually assails the eye throughout other portions of the river's course. There is something that is at once austere and beautiful in their idiosyncrasy; and they add much to the variety of Burma.

There is a pathway that winds up to them on the

south of Yenan-Gyaung, which is like a pathway over sea-cliffs in England, and along this pathway there are many vantage points, which tempt one to stay and look upon all the world that spreads away below them, from Yenan-Gyaung, on the river where the boats lie, to the last derrick on the hills. The river runs some way into the dry bed of the Yenan-Gyaung, making a sheltered harbour, which is the nucleus of the settlement. In the hollows there are brown thatched houses, dark tamarinds, and slender palms. A large house with white gables, and a big vermilion drum of iron that is full of oil, proclaim the presence of the white man. Every little knoll, and every commanding eminence, has its pagoda, white or gold, or weather-beaten grey. Several of these rise up in their new grace from the red crumbling ruins of much older buildings. For a full mile under the cliffs, the *peingaws* and *laungzats* lie waiting for their burden of oil. The native sounds, the clang of the monastery bells, the laughter of women bathing by the river, the shrill voices of lads at school, calling their Kah-gyi-Kha-gwe, the incessant crooning of doves, have here a bass accompaniment like the beating of a loud fretful heart, which all but absorbs them. This is the new power at work, the voice of the engine which, from dawn to dark, labours and toils in the service of its masters. Up here on the downland the grass is tender and green, and diversified with dew diamonds and a world of minute beauty. The morning air blows cool and fresh, and in early September in the shadow of a white pagoda, or the shelter of a carved

UNDER THE CLIFFS

piasath, one attains here an exquisite climate. A summer morning on a cliff overlooking the sea, when balmy breezes are afoot, has no greater power to lull and to charm the spirit.

And if the morning on the cliff-tops has her secret of fresh delights, the evening comes with revelations of surpassing beauty. The picture she paints is so tender and so majestic, that it must be difficult to overstate its charm. First there are the great cliffs with white faces overlooking the river. Beyond them there spread the waters, over spaces so vast that the eye cannot compass them. The river embraces in its folds a succession of islands, so numerous and varied that all sense of a single stream is lost. They are covered with meadows of silver-pink *kaing*, in the midst of which lie purple lakes and rosy pathways of waters; but where the islands cease, the river spreads in a single expanse from the foot of the white cliffs to the low misty western shore. The opal gleams of the sunset, breaking through grey cloud masses, fall in long reflections on its surface. To the eye ranging swiftly over it, the wide world of waters seems absolutely motionless—a mystic sea of infinite depth. A water-fowl skims its surface, bird and shadow, and the air is so clear, the waters are so mirror-like, the environment so still and lone, that for a long while its wings flapping lazily over the water convey the only hint of motion in a spectacle of arrested beauty. In the far west the gleam of fires and the smoke ascending from villages and hamlets greet the eye with the wistful suggestion

that is inseparable from all such symptoms of human life, in a world of infinite and inanimate calm.

(4) THITTA-BWÉ

Over the cliffs it is a Sabbath-day's journey to Thitta-bwé. Two miles of cliff divide it from the derricks and engines of Yenan-Gyaung, giving it seclusion and peace; and a little bay runs up from the lordly Irrawaddy to help to make it beautiful. Like all the villages along this coast, it lies at the mouth of a freshet, which holds water only after heavy rain. But the freshet makes a little valley, and a fan of alluvial sand, along which the great boats of the Irrawaddy and the dugouts of the village lie at anchor. The village lies snugly within a stockade of purple thorn and giant cactus, interspersed with flowers. Some noble trees shelter it from the excessive sun, each as beautiful as an English oak; and the green swelling downs rise up on every hand, broken here and there into patterns by the hedgerows. In the soft haze of evening the little settlement looks the very picture of rural repose.

There is a house at Thitta-bwé built for the European traveller. Airiness is its chief characteristic. Its front room is made up entirely of windows. These are covered by slight awnings of plaited mat, that can be thrust open or let down by means of wooden props. It is with reluctance that one closes them for an hour or two each day, when the sun-blaze on the waters is

too dazzling to the eyes; for the picture they frame is of a vast mirror-world of waters, dreamy islands of cloud, and a wave of rolling mountains so etherealised by the pouring sun, that they seem to guard no material world beyond, but to stand for the very frontiers of infinite space. And all beyond them is indeed vague and unreal to the dwellers in the valley of the great river. They are "The Mountains of the West," a barrier that not one man in ten thousand ever dreams of crossing.

From Thitta-bwé the pathway runs on over the cliffs to Nyaunglay, another little village hidden in a similar little valley. It has a colony of Musulman river pilots, who have settled down in it and have married the catholic daughters of the soil. They have a small mosque of their own, and a muezzin who calls them to prayer. I wonder, in a generation or two, how much of the Indian Musulman will remain.

At Thitta-bwé the night comes with the gentlest of transitions. The dark river twinkles back the message of the stars; the great boats make shadowy forms along its banks; from the village comes the litany of pious elders at prayer. Clear and quick across the still waters peal the notes of a distant flute, the player rapt in the ecstasy of his art. There is no music in the world to me so mellow and artless, no music so instinct, as the music of the flute, with the primitive spirit of man. As I sit here in the dark and listen to the mellow notes floating over the spaces of the river, it seems to me that I have bridged ten thousand years of life; the

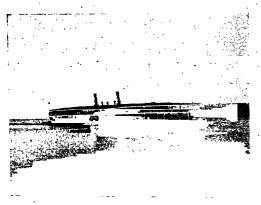
trappings of civilisation fall insignificantly away from me; I forget who I am, and remember only that I must have heard this flute-player and his music on some such river-edge long, long ago in the past. I sit on long after he has ceased, while the waters flow on, into the dawn, rapt in the mystery of life.

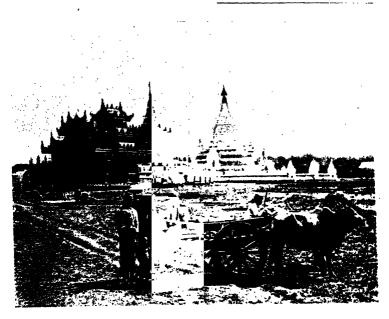
CHAPTER XIX

THE ROAD TO PAGAN

A GREAT sandbank has been forming for years before the town of Yenan-Gyaung, and the present channel in consequence lies far to the west; so far is it, that the cliffs of Yenan-Gyaung are almost lost to sight as I slowly travel on. The western shore is low, and villages, almost treeless, cluster on the edge of the alluvial plain. Popa with his cloud-cap, like an embodied memory of his past, is lifted high above the rolling uplands. White-sapphire clouds have taken the place of his smoke, as though the ages had purified him, bringing peace to his fierce heart.

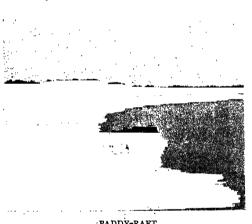
Presently the channel swings back under the eastern cliffs and we come upon the village of Kyanye, hidden in dark woods, its long-boats drawn up by the water's edge. The river, like an hour-glass, compresses into a single stream, then spreads out again, encircling islands of *kaing* meadows. Later, in the west, there are wide green plains, with herds of cattle grazing on them, dark blue masses of oak-like woods, villages with monastery roofs and pagoda spires. Electric clouds swoon in the sky above the blue mountains of Aracan, and the river spreads unbroken from shore to shore.

Pagan-galay and Sinbyu-gyun (White Elephant Island) face each other across the water. I have left my little launch, with all her struggles to breast the tide, and am embarked upon one of the great ships of the Flotilla with two flats in tow. One hundred and fifty feet of pathway is the right we claim, and the roar of our thundering paddles, the deep throbbing of the hidden engines, mark the unequal conflict between the immemorial river and this new factor driving ruthlessly ahead, and caring nothing for its protest. Brute force driven by pitiless mind is the burden of the iron paddles as they tear through the heart of the water; of the engines, as they swing to the wrath of the driven flame. The waters plunge in great billows between the flats and the steamer's side, and the rudder cleaves a line between. Long after the ship has passed, her course is marked upon the river's surface, and every inch of the shore and every boat drawn up along it, or abroad upon the waters, knows, by the strange paroxysm, of the portent that has passed.

A STEAMER OF THE FLOTILLA

Salé, at which we anchor for the night, is a place of ancient ruined pagodas, giant gryphons, and carved

MONASTERY AND PAGODA

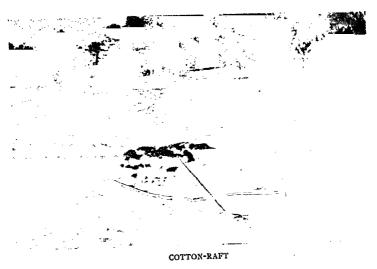
monasteries. There are two new white and gold pagodas here in the Pagan style. The Phaya-taga, the builder of one of these, a fine old man who has made his money in trade, is cheerily superintending the completion of the details: the painting of the four *tagôn-daings* of vermilion and gold with the galon-bird at their summits, and the gilding of the Recording Angels over the great bell. There is a very beautiful view, from where he stands, of the wide river; so still that it would look asleep, but for the long canoes almost racing down its tide. This old man has amassed a fortune and has lived the strenuous life. Now that the evening of his days has come upon him, he turns with the fine

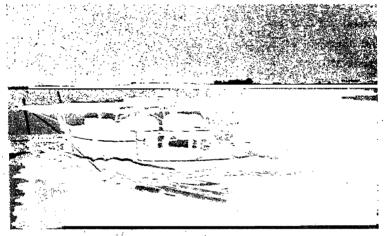
instinct of his people to better things. He is giving up the pomps and vanities of colour, of rich raiment, of secular pride. Trade is less and less with him; the lust of possession is passing away from his heart. Yet, as I look at him, I see clearly that he is a man of the world, with the strong air of one who has fought for his place, and such manners as come only to one who is conscious of power and success.

Beyond Salé lies Singu, a village very successfully concealed from view by a low curtain of hills. Some white pagodas alone mark its presence, but the village is growing in prosperity, and the oil company at Yenan-Gyaung will shortly begin operations here.

PADDY-RAFT

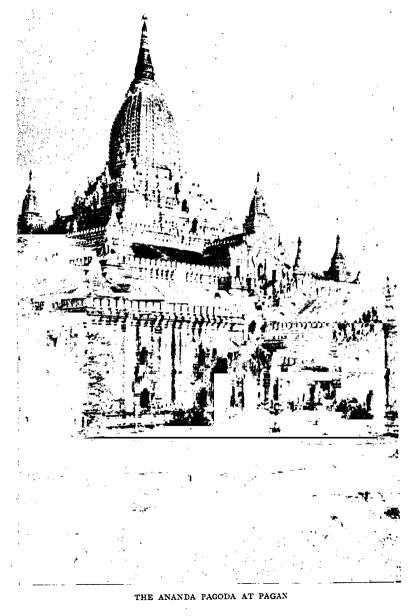
Passing on, we meet low cliffs in the west, growing into blue mountainous spurs, and on the east there are the broken Tharrawaddy hills and Popa, showing four points. Between, there is a low country slowly sloping up, and conveying what is not uncommon here, an impression of a long hollow, into which it would seem the river might easily tumble over. There is scarcely an island here to break the vast mirror of the river, spread from shore to shore. While we wait to repair

some damage to the engines, the lesser life on its surface deploys before us. Rafts of glazed Ali Baba jars bear down upon us, and barely escape disaster. The largest pots sustain the raft, which is laden with the rest, their backs a-glisten, and their small mouths gaping at the sky. Four idle men make the crew of each raft, and seeing disaster imminent, they suddenly develop a furious energy and pull the raft out of the main current in which we are detained; but for the most part they lie on their backs and dream, trusting to the bounty of the great stream. Rafts also bring large quantities of paddy and stone grinding-slabs for sharpening *dahs*.

COTTON-RAFT

Boats bring cattle, and one passes us full of buffaloes. These come from the dry country about Mingyan, and are sold in the prosperous Delta. In seasons of drought in the upper country, the river is laden with such cattle-

rafts and boats on their way to Maubin. But this life does not begin to move on the river till the last expected rise has taken place, and the bare sandbanks leave the channel more defined. Raft-owners profit also by the buoys of the Flotilla Company, which begin to appear by the first of November. At that time an officer of the company who spends each summer in

CATTLE-RAFT

England returns to his work on the river, and, day by day and foot by foot, marks out with a hundred thousand buoys the navigable channel. The company is in fact supreme on the Irrawaddy. Its steamers bear its trade, and every hamlet and town along the river's course for nine hundred miles is conscious of its presence. But a hundred years ago it would have done more; it would have won for itself the sovereign power in Burma.

THE ANANDA PAGODA AT PAGAN

As we near Yenan-gyat there become visible, for the first time, the countless pyramids and spires of Pagan, the most stately capital Burma has ever known. The nearer ones are cut in dark outlines against the sky; the most distant are so faint that they seem like the unreal fabrics of a city of dreams. Yet there is nothing in this superb picture, in all these hosts of pinnacles and domes and spires, to hint that before one there lies a city of the dead. Instead, it looks, hung here between the drowsy clouds and the mirror-like calm of the mighty river, like some new Venice of the East, destined to play an immortal part in the history of the world. There is no one who would judge, from here, that seven hundred years have passed since its day was closed—for ever.

CHAPTER XX

TANGYI-SWAY-DAW

YENAN-GYAT is the lesser brother of Yenan-Gyaung, and, like it, a place of oil-wells and commercial adventure. A certain luminous interest is imparted to it by the little war that wages here between the two companies which are exploiting it; but I am concerned to-day with the great white building which gleams on the summit of the Tangyi hills, a thousand feet above the world. From its platform there is a view of Pagan that is unsurpassed in Burma, and a legend of the people tells that in a bygone day the Buddha stood upon this peak, and prophesied the coming greatness of the city.

A little above Yenan-gyat is the village of Ayadaw, to which the river runs up in a side channel. From here the road to the pagoda marches along the foreshore under white cliffs. The strewn wreckage of timber, the sandy shore, the fragrant water, have that about them that recalls the fringe of the sea. Half a mile more brings me to the village of Sekwa, lying at the mouth of a valley The road turns up at a right angle through the fenced homesteads of the village, over

SEKWA

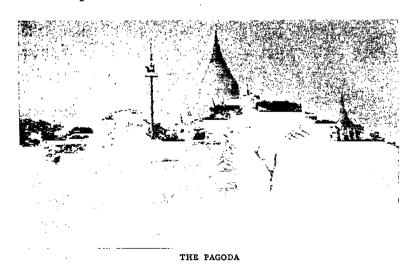
wooden bridges and under the spires of a monastery, till it is well on its way up the valley, where steam-engines thump and fill the air with vibrant energy, and derricks make patterns against the wild hill-slopes. Fields of millet bear me company for a space, but soon I am alone in the solitude of the gorge.

Euphorbias and cactus rise up in fantastic forms, and tamarisks cluster in the bed of the valley, where a parched streamlet lies in pools in the midst of boulders crusted with white salts. Aridity and desolation are the characteristics of the place, and even in September the heat palpitates on the barren red slopes with an Erythrean fervour.

Leaving the roadway, which has been made by the oil-adventurers, a pathway of the people climbs up the steep ascent to the Tangyi-Sway-Daw Pagoda, now in steps cut in the stone, now along a level way bordered by grasses, and fields of yellow and pink wildflowers. Trees are dwarfed and few and far between. The first steep climb brings its reward in a sudden and superb view of the city of Pagan, its white spires twinkling in the distance; the whole picture framed in a wave of the mountains. And looking back from here I can see the whole of the little valley up which the road has lain, from the white powdered boulders in its bed, to the houses of the village at its mouth. Distance and the growing shadows of afternoon take away something from the arid ferocity of the scene, and the derrick spires speak a word of civilisation and man's courage. The view over the hills gradually expands, and bold

crests rise up between the sky and the Irrawaddy plain. The pathway, proceeding along the eastern face of precipitous cliffs, brings me at last within sight of the pagoda, poised on the utmost summit of the hills.

The pagoda, built by Anawrata the Great, King of Pagan, is worthy of its builder and of its site. Its rounded outline, of a lustrous white, culminates in a golden spire, and the dark winged roofs of monasteries cluster about its feet. Its intrinsic size is enhanced by knowledge of the task involved in its construction here, far from all human resources. The long climb to it is extravagantly repaid by the noble view that expands from its platform.

THE PAGODA

In the east, below it, there are the crumpled spurs of the mountain, with villages cheerily embowered amongst trees, and green fields in the valley openings; then a

blue ribbon of water, followed by alluvial flats left bare by the falling river. They are green now, with red patches where fields are being sown. Here and there on their vast surface, a hamlet, lifted a fraction above the water-level, maintains its insignificant existence. Beyond lies the main volume of the river under the mighty plain of Pagan. Its dark and white pagodas rise up, each one clearly visible; and from here, if anywhere, one may form a just estimate of the greatness of the ancient city. The Tawni hills beyond make a red ruffled line across the plain, and above them, in the extreme east, there towers volcanic Popa, whose great size can only be justly gauged from a neighbour such as this. The hills of Mingyan and Monywa appear on the northern horizon, where the river in loops reaches away into misty space.

As the sun sets, the pagoda-crowned peak sends its mighty shadow over the plain, and the spires of the dead city flame for the last time in the fading light. In the west, the crumpled hills reach away over low undulating lands to the meridian chains of the Yoma Daung, and the still loftier summit of Mount Victoria, ten thousand feet above the sea. The Yaw river makes its way through the landscape, a river of gold in the flooding sunset.

Stone umbrellas fixed upon the backs of elephants ornament the platform of the pagoda, bells hang there from carved posts, flamboyant roofs surmount the southern stairs; under the dark *tazoungs* there are colossal monk's-bowls of grey marble; a stone

python protrudes from the earth near the base of the pagoda; steps on the west lead down to the monastery courts, where pilgrims assemble, to the dwelling-place of the abbot and his monks, to a white-walled hall of ordination overlooking the panorama of the hills, to a water reservoir in a sheltered hollow, dug, they say, by

FROM TANGYI-SWAY-DAW

Anawrata the king, and last of all to stone caves and temples of great antiquity, frescoed with legends of the Buddha.

There is one remaining spectacle. A wall runs round the platform by the pagoda on three sides, but on the fourth the flagstones impend directly over the deeps. Whether this be by chance or from the ruin of time, it is certain that instinct in architecture could devise

nothing more superb. Here, within a child's reach of the edge, there kneels an aged woman at prayer, the one solitary occupant of the pagoda. The fading sunlight envelops her in its golden mist. Her hands are clasped before her, her visionary eyes are turned towards the distant city, her face is transfigured with sincerest piety. High above her tower the white corner dragons, the tapering spires, and the golden bulb of the pagoda. She has climbed all this way up from some little hamlet in the plain below, because she believes that in a bygone day the Buddha, the founder of her faith, stood here upon this sacred spot.

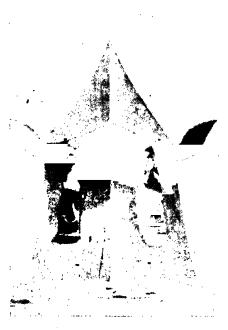
CHAPTER XXI

ABOVE PAGAN

PAGAN TO MINGYAN

AFTER the chambered cliffs of Pagan there is a flat shore slowly ascending on the east, dotted with villages and palms and small clustering trees. On the west the land, more level, reaches away in a plain to the Tangyi hills. The falling river releases from its embrace the island villages, which here, near Pakoku, almost float upon the water at high flood.

Pakoku itself has grown into importance since the caprice of the sovereign river left Konywa high and dry. Half the town, aristocratic with its court-house, its polo-ground, its club and its tennis-courts, and the houses of the European community of officials, stands on a promontory, which is separated from the other half by a thirsty freshet bed which is heavy sand for three parts of the year, and flooded channel for the remaining fourth. Elephants bathe here and cart-wheels creak and drone across it, from its cliffs in the east to the yards of the timber-sawmen on the west, under the lee of the native town. On this further side live

the Wesleyan missionary and the skippers of the Chindwin. The town, whose marked prosperity has come to it only since the British annexation, can boast of a number of straight metalled roads; a bazaar, where silks gleam and the Burmese maiden rules; groups of airy pagodas, graceful in form, after the manner ot Pagan, though poor in detail; carved monasteries, worth going some way to see; and the little houses of the people, some of which are very neat and smart, while many are made beautiful by the presence of feathery tamarinds, masses of pink creepers, and yellow-blossomed gourds. Of a morning its lanes fill with processional monks, whose yellow robes gleam in the vistas.

SQUIRRELS AT THE PROW OF A BOAT

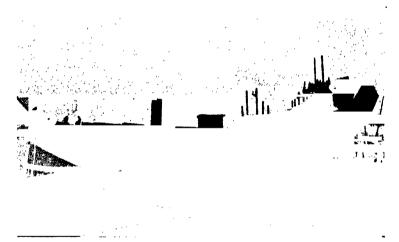
But the keynote to the character of Pakoku, and that which distinguishes it from its fellows, is struck where the shipwrights labour under leafy tamarinds for

two miles along the river shore. Here the great boats of the Irrawaddy may be seen in every stage of their evolution, from round timber to stately craft. Steel saws scream and crash in the heart of the prisoned logs; carvers with skilled fingers trace their rich patterns on steering chairs and sterns, and delicate chisels transform the dead wood into figures alive with action, and flowers of intricate beauty; planks with red ashes smoking over them take the curves which will lift them into grace; and here, last of all, having passed through every phase of their gestation, the finished craft are launched upon the bosom of the great river, there to accomplish their destiny.

Behind Pakoku there is a low ridge of sand-hills running east and west, and the popular tradition is, that of old these were the right bank of the river, and that the prosperous modern town is built upon its ancient bed. Konywa, whose decline has contributed to the prosperity of Pakoku, was less than fifty years ago the principal town at the mouth of the Chindwin. "Striking across towards the western shore," wrote Yule, "we approach the large village of Koonyuwa, marked by conspicuous temples and two gigantic griffin-lions. The shore was lined with magnificent trees, their large boles surrounded by the risen stream, which now washed almost the floors of the cottages. The stooping branches laden with thick foliage, the numerous cottages buried in the trees, and the small pagoda-spires here and there visible, rising through the further groves, presented a succession of beautiful pictures. We anchored almost

SHIPYARDS AT PAKOKU

among the lofty stems of a palmyra-grove, which the waters had inundated." Mingyan, higher up, which he describes as lying "very low, just above the water-level at its greatest height, and without an inch to spare," is now three miles away from the river's edge.

Approaching Mingyan, I come upon the full moon rising as the sun dips over the world. "*Vos O*

HULL OF A GREAT "HNAU" AT PAKOKU

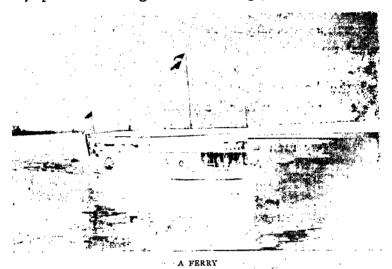
Clarissima mundi lumina, labentem cælo quæ ducitis annum"; I murmur the Virgilian invocation. Flocks of wild duck flying swiftly overhead; slow-winged pee-wits floating parallel with the face of the river; troops of egrets wheeling in wide circles and showing their white under-wings to the silver moon; desert palms, sable against the red-lit west; dark figures of boat-men on the river; and over all the growing beauty of the moon's trail on the purple spaces—of such is the

spectacle that meets my eye. And long after the sun has set, the steamer throbs on, favoured by the radiant clouds and the white splendour of the moon.

Towards midnight new lights appear on the northern horizon, and gradually grow into the transports *Freebooter* and *Rob Roy*, with flats in tow, and three hundred men with racked muskets on board. The placid calm of the moonlit night is rudely broken by these new-comers. All moves as in a play. The panting steamers race past me down the river, till they find an open space at which to touch; then in a flash they swing to, and slowly move up into place. The river, lashed into fury by the paddles, plunges in great waves and breaks vehemently against the shore.

A MASTER-BUILDER AT PAKOKU

The smaller craft, catching the infection, strain madly at their moorings. Lascars shout, and captains roar their orders above the din. The placing of the gangway planks is a signal to the hungry men on board,

A FERRY

and sixty seconds see as many men ashore with cooking pots that glitter in the moonlight, foraging for firewood and seeking out places in which to cook their food. Spectators talk in bated whispers of war in the Chin hills, and there is some quality in the spectacle that makes the blood run and the heart beat faster. Up there in those distant highlands, so far away that for all their ten thousand feet they are invisible from here, the rude tribesmen are unaware of the power they have evoked, of the destiny that is already in train. The British Administrator up there turns from his day's toil with a feeling of irritation, to the tales of

tribal raids and the necessity for meting out punishment; the soldier in command of the frontier battalion looks with small pleasure at the prospect of a trifling expedition; these men, now going up there to fight, are all thinking only of their empty stomachs, and the supreme need of staying their hunger; but the spectator, called up in the stilly night, perceives that events are afoot. For him the veil of the commonplace is lifted, and the beating heart of the empire sounds in the night watches. "War," say the sailors on the ships, and the idlers on the shore, and the word is a moving one. Stray men who have seen the passing spectacle go home with a new-found reverence in their hearts for the mysterious entity under whose shadow they live. As the night wears on, the fires of the bivouac die down; the bearded men fall into deep sleep; and the late moon, as she moves from mid-heaven to the shadowy west, looks down upon rows of white sleepers, who might be dead men, stretched here upon the shore of the immortal river.

CHAPTER XXII

IN MANDALAY

THE ARACAN PAGODA

NOTE.—*The charm and the interest of Mandalay are lodged in the Past. No attempt to describe this city could be to any purpose, which did not include a survey of people and events that are no more. But in this book I seek to make a picture of life in Burma as it is. I leave therefore the description of Mandalay to another occasion, and offer this chapter on so much of its life as centres in the Aracan Pagoda; a shrine which divides with the Shway Dagôn the spiritual homage of Burma. It does this because it is believed to contain the only contemporary likeness of Buddha upon earth.*

IN 82, Cathedral Street, as I pass down it on my way to the Aracan Pagoda in Mandalay, there is life afoot which tempts me often to linger.

It is the early morning hour when monks go forth to beg, and the street, and all the little alleys leading from it, are full of the men in yellow. In the wayside shops the sandal-makers are busy, the *hti*-smiths are hammering, and cabinet-makers are plying their minute vocation. From the lay-schools come the voices of children, like the voices of hedge-sparrows cheeping together; bullock-carts creak along the road; ponies, rich with embroidered trappings, amble swiftly by; here and there a nun in faded yellow steps gently in the dust.

Cathedral Street, thus bravely started, ends abruptly, as many things in Mandalay used to, in a ditch. At its bottom women wash clothes, pigs rout for food, and the blue hills of Sagaing and the Shan highlands flank the vista east and west. A crazy bridge a little way off takes me to the other side, where the shops are nearer to each other, and tinmen, and the makers of gold and

IN 82, CATHEDRAL STREET

silver umbrellas, display their wares. All along the way the painted acacias make vivid patches of green, most vivid in Mandalay, when all else is dry and withered in the sun. White and gold pagodas line the road; there is a clanging of great bells, the tinkle of little ones on lofty spires. Chinese eating houses tempt the passers-by; silken skirts flash in the sunlight, and dustwhirls drive along the beaten track.

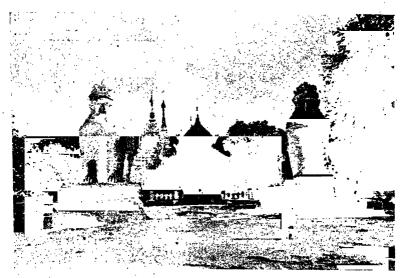
From a painting by J. R. Middleton.

FEEDING THE TURTLES AT THE SACRED TANK, MANDALAY.

From a painting by J. R. Middleton

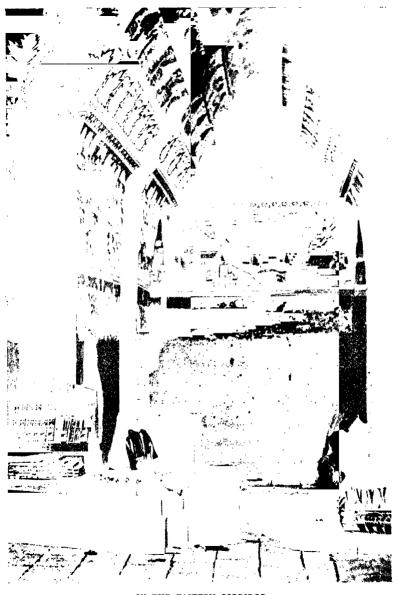
And here, as a matter of fact, I have come upon the threshold of the Aracan Pagoda, where all Mandalay

NORTH GATE, ARACAN PAGODA

gathers for worship. Tailors labour here, sewing pink and yellow silk coats for children; shoemakers sit surrounded by green and crimson broadcloth shoes; the

WEST GATE, ARACAN PAGODA

shops jostle each other, growing more numerous, till I reach where the great masonry cats are scarcely visible from the press of their multitude.

From here to the latticed doors, behind which the profile of the Buddha is faintly visible in the interior gloom, there is a long aisle, half-lit, and filled with yet other stalls.

Some of the pillars of the hall are of plain unpainted wood, others are rich with mirror mosaic and gold. The scene is so attractive, so charged with incident and multiplicity of beauty, that I come insensibly to a standstill. The long vista ahead tempts my feet forward; the shops, the bars of diffused light streaming through the corridors behind, tempt me to stay and look back. One who came here for the first time would need to be

IN THE EASTERN CORRIDOR

callous indeed, if he hoped to go straight through from end to end without a pause. Four corridors with gold-beamed roofs make the square of the edifice under which the Buddha is enthroned. The exterior of it, now of masonry carved as intricately as wood, rises in diminishing stages to a spire, and the whole fabric is overlaid

A STALL

with gold. False as the workmanship may be, meretricious as you would say it is, to work in brick and mortar as if it were wood, hybrid as is the architecture, nothing can detract from the splendour of this gold. Outside, where the unimpeded sun flames on the roof of the temple, all is dazzling, almost blinding light; within, in the long corridors, there is a cloistral gloom, and in the innermost sanctuary there would be dark-

ness, were it not for the tapers that flicker on its threshold, and the stray beams which enter in at the great doors, and flame on the new-laid gold of the image.

The pagoda is approached by four corridors at the cardinal points, and each of these ends in a wall of the central shrine. At the north, east, and south, there are pointed arches filled with latticed doors, two of which are seldom opened. The western wall, which stands at the back of the image, has no opening. It is towards the east that the Buddha faces, and here the devotion of his people culminates.

The scene as I look upon it from the eastern corridor is one of extraordinary interest. Over my head is a frescoed porch, gorgeous with the colouring and the imagery of the East. Palaces, crenulated walls, and lotus-covered waters; ascending spires; kings and princes in cloth of gold and jewelled vestments, nobles and monks, fabulous beings, elephants and horses, myriads of soldiery, demons of the grossest ugliness, and all the pains of hell, the transitoriness and the suffering of life, are here depicted with singular, if primitive realism. To stand here and look up to this painted roof, is to be carried away into the crowded thoroughfares of a strange and grotesque world, from which the transition back to the life surging about one is more than bewildering.

Here under this pointed roof sits a blind leper, his hands held forward in mute appeal to the passing world; and in his stark face there is written the terrible

IN THE ARACAN PAGODA

history of his life. Look at it, for here is something that is inexpressibly sad, inexpressibly patient and resigned. Pride, fire, vivacity, hope, all have left it. Yet this man lives on.

Here, before a stall of twists of silk, a blaze of the richest colours, lies a comely girl, full-hipped, asleep. Here, a flower-stall distils its fragrance, the gloom of the passage lit with the pink and purple glory of its lotuses, the wax-white sprays of its tuberoses, and the starry masses of its jasmines, plucked in some garden

THE WORKSHOPS OF THE BUDDHA SCULPTORS, ARACAN PAGODA

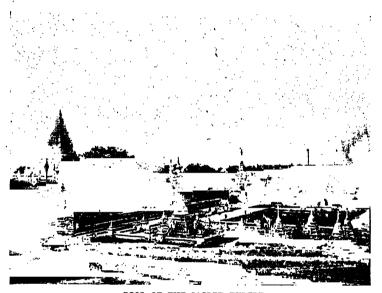
in the early dawn. A blind fiddler plays in a distant sunlit alcove, supported by his wife on the mellow *puttala*. A great crowd for ever surges by; a crowd of monks and nuns, little children and white-filleted

old men, wrinkled hags like skeletons at a feast, the prettiest women and the prettiest silks of Mandalay; white-hatted Shans, Paloungs from the tea-country, women from distant highlands, in plush and velvet; the aged slow of foot, the young impetuous; faces stamped with the sadness and the weariness of life, faces of laughter and lovelit eyes; voices mumbling the never-ending litany of sorrow—Aneitsa, Dookha, Anata—Change, Sorrow, Unreality; voices like the tinkle of pagoda bells with the added human thrill. All pass on under the shadow of the painted arch, to the wide corridor beyond, where the light streams in through the lofty Roman archways.

There they come, one and all, to a pause, kneeling on the spread mats and carpets in rear of the lines of worshippers already assembled; the men in front, the women behind. Beyond the bowed heads is a long trough of flowers and paper pennons, then the rows of flickering lights, and last of all, shrouded in the tremulous gloom, the figure of the Buddha.

Shadowy forms move within, climbing to his knees, and reaching fingers, charged with fluttering gold, to every part of his body; and the effect of the fresh gold as it cleaves in the gloom is that of a flame playing all over the image.

For hours one can stand here and look with unrelaxed pleasure on this spectacle, which is so vivid, so imposing, so genuine, and so spontaneous. Here there are no attendant priests, there is no liturgy, there is no marshalling of the worshippers. The spectacle

remains; its units for ever change. Men and women come and go, passing right across the scene; some rise to leave, while others stoop to pray; each, unconscious of the rest, plays his part in the moving drama. Near me there is a woman with a tray laden with small flowers, which she holds up towards the

POOL OF THE SACRED TURTLE

shrine as she kneels. Her child of two, barely able to stand, clutches at her slender arms, and as the tray goes up, pours into it a cup-full of white petals—her share; and it is such a picture of artless devotion as no country in the world can rival.

The child is an exquisite being, pretty as all Burmese children are; the mother has not yet lost the freshness of her youth. Her dark hair, coiled with

THE SELLERS OF BIRDS AT THE GATE OF THE TEMPLE

infinite care and finish on her small head, is decorated with a spray of tuberoses; her short coat of muslin is immaculately white; a pink *pawa*, light as gossamer, blows about her shoulders; there is a shimmer of silk about her knees; her bare feet, turned up, have the subtle feminine attraction. There is no trace in her soft face of that straining after concentration while at prayer which is characteristic of the strenuous peoples. All that she does seems to come to her without thought. A little Pagan if you will, worshipping without any more

effort than some field-flower, when it opens to the sky above it.

There is a party of nuns behind her, wrinkled and small and old. They tell their beads, and wag their toothless jaws, and come and go with the large red-lacquered trays and water-bottles, which are as much a part of them as the begging-bowls and palmyra fans are of the male fraternity.

BRONZE GIANTS FROM ARACAN

A group of Chinese Shans, in strange head-dress and long coats, cling together here, as do all provincials on a visit to the capital. A mother sits nursing her babe; small urchins lie about, with no idea of worship; monks in flowing robes pick their way through the prostrate crowd; young fellows in silks swagger about; stall-holders take their ease under signboards of fantastic design, wholly unconscious of any impropriety, and keen spectators of the moving drama that unfolds before them from dawn to dark. Few occupations

can rival theirs, for an indolent, sociable man, with an eye to the pageantry of life. Foreigners stalk about unmolested, Sikhs and Mohammedans from the barracks at Mandalay, and "globe-trotters" from the capitals of the world. And all this while the worship at the great shrine goes forward. All that one has seen of Roman Catholic churches in Europe, all that one has pictured of the synagogue, where money-changers and the sellers of doves were used to congregate, is here epitomised.

Outside the eastern entrance there are two large and handsome masonry pools, in which the sacred turtle live. Here in the still green water the golden pinnacle of the pagoda is mirrored; and the turtles come up to the surface to be fed by crowds of pretty women who sit waiting on the sun-steeped stairs.

At the gateways there are cages full of small birds, which the simple and the pious buy, to free them from captivity. But the birds are little slaves at heart, and they are only too glad to return to their cages.

In the outer courtyard, north of the shrine, and propped against the wall, are the bronze giants and three-headed elephants brought from Aracan with the image, in the days of the great King Bodaw Phaya, who made war upon his neighbour for its possession. Hard by is a small shrine, with a wishing-stone before it; and within its bars there are the gilded figures of *nats*, who receive no small share of the devotion of passing visitors. But here people are conscious of observation, and are ashamed.

Book V

THE CHINDWIN

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHINDWIN

THE Chindwin is the greatest tributary of the Irrawaddy, and it is worthy, alike by reason of its volume, its beauty, and its own strong individual personality, of the part it plays in the life of Burma. Its sources lie in the midst of snow-touched peaks and unexplored mountains, in the far north. It is not till, with its tributaries, it enters the Hu Kawng valley in the 27th degree of North Latitude, that it becomes known to civilisation, and even thence it flows for a long way through country to which a traveller can only commit himself at considerable peril. For the Pax Britannica has not yet settled upon the wild tracts that border its northern waters. Nor is any continuous navigation of it possible till after it has emerged from the defiles which bar its progress between the 26th and 27th degrees of North Latitude. Thereafter, before the depletion of winter lessens the volume of its waters, shallow stern-wheeled steamers can traverse it without hindrance to its junction with the Irrawaddy. It enters the greater river in two streams, with a space twenty-two miles in extent between. One of these streams, the

present highway, is an old royal canal cut by a bygone king of Pagan. It silted up and for centuries it

COMING ON BOARD

remained unused, till in 1824 a great flood came and cut a new passage through it.

This arm of the Chindwin now enters the Irrawaddy at an acute angle, and the land between is low. Hence, for some distance from the apex, the two rivers look as if they ran parallel to each other. From the bridge of a Chindwin boat, the funnels of the great steamers on the Irrawaddy can be seen racing over the level of the fields; the town of Mingyan gleams on the far eastern shore ten miles away, and the farthest bank of

the great river can be traced from the mid-current of its feudatory. At high floods the narrow peninsula between them is submerged, and tree-tops, and hamlet roofs, alone mark the division between.

Leaving the Irrawaddy in the early dawn of an October morning, I am well into the Chindwin, whose scenery comes with a sudden transition upon me, accustomed since I left the wide spaces of the Delta to meridian mountain-chains, to lines of broken, irregular hills, high cliffs, and a rolling undulating country. For here, at the mouth of the Chindwin, the Delta, it would seem, begins again. Blue hills are still happily visible; but the main impression is of flat lands, and groves of

THE CHINDWIN AT MINGIN

tufted palms, and umbrageous sheltering trees; and a narrow river unbroken from one low shore to the other.

Villages are numerous along the banks; monastery spires, thatched cottages, and here and there a pagoda in the Pagan style lend diversity to the landscape. White-winged boats, laden with the produce of the valley, speed down-stream under stress of a northerly wind, to the mightier traffic of the Irrawaddy. Haystacks on piles, like great bee-hives, built high to protect them from the floods, strike a new and individual note. Sandy spaces, left bare by the shrinking river, are strewn with logs and derelict trees. Here the people are busy with dragging chains and cattle; and, trunk after trunk, the harvest of the flood is borne away into the mist.

STERN-WHEELER ON THE CHINDWIN

The navigation of the river in its lower courses is hazardous and difficult. All the way since dawn, I have listened to the leadsman's song. For it is the turn of the year, new channels have been forming all the flood season, and all is yet new and unknown. I am travelling in the first stern-wheeler of the season, the skipper on the bridge has a reputation to lose, and the company is intolerant of mistakes. But for me, who am but an idle traveller below, there is much

EARLY TRIBUTARIES

entertainment. The almost noiseless paddles, the summer day, the white processional clouds, the drowsy blue of the nearer hills, make serene travelling for any one not freighted with responsibility.

The trees, undone by the floods, lie like Goliaths on the sandy banks. The walls of the islands in our course are striped with strange patterns where the blowing wind makes furrows in the unresisting sand. Fragments of them fall all through the day into the river, as though to reverse the very process which called them into existence. Ceaseless change, ceaseless unrest, is the character of these Eastern rivers,

notwithstanding that they attain to heights of superficial calm.

As we go, a quartet of peaks, like the Pyramids in Egypt, rise up on the river's horizon. Dark blue masses of foliage, and intense yellow-green strips of rice, line the rich foreshore; overhead there is a blue cloud-puffed sky. In the fields the people toil, and yellow-robed monks pass in procession amongst the palms. The country is slightly more broken and undulating in the west, ending on the river in high mud cliffs. The quartet loom bigger and nearer, and a long wave of low hills comes down to the river. The village of Hnaw-Kado greets us, facing an unbroken line of palms.

At sunset, in the short half-hour before the dark, there is a beautiful climax to the day, in wide spaces of pink sky, shadowy purple hills, and a great reach of waters blending these two colours and spreading unbroken from shore to shore. It is no longer the Chindwin or any definite tract; but a rich and splendid page in the book of the world's beauty. The dark tufted palms cut against the sunset blaze, the wide reach of waters, the blue pyramidal, isolated hills, recall, if anything, the Nile.

We anchor for the night in mid-river, and as the stars began to shine, the skipper comes down, red-eyed and tense-featured, from his day's toil. He has been up on the bridge since early dawn, his eyes straining through the hours over the river spaces. This is the most anxious season in the year for him. Thirty

EARLY TRIBUTARIES

seconds of carelessness would suffice to ruin his career. Hence the chant,

> Ek bam mila nahin,
> Hath kum do bum,

I have listened to all day.

As we ascend at dawn the quartet lose their character, and develop into a blue-green hill on the west bank of the river, and Monywa, with its long lines of waiting boats, its dark trees, and white pagodas, comes into view. Once the plaything of the floods, a settlement in which the court-house frequently became an island, accessible only by boat, Monywa is now protected by an embankment, behind which it lies like a fortress behind its walls. It is a pleasing little town of seven thousand inhabitants, commanding views of no little beauty. A military air pervades it; bugles peal above the voices of its people; and the twinkling lance-heads of men-at-arms gleam of an afternoon through its deep-fringed foliage. It can boast of a little social club, at which the small colony of English folk meet of an evening. Like all such colonies *in partibus*, it is hospitable and willing to be friendly to the stranger. The hills that face it are tenanted by austere anchorite monks of another faith, who live their lives in complete seclusion from the world.

We stay a long while under the high shore at Monywa, to take the mails brought hither from Mandalay by train. All that lies beyond Monywa is accessible only by water. While we wait, the river edge is lively with bathers of all ages. They leap and

make somersaults into the water, swim under it, and feel their way with the help of slim bamboos, and laugh and shout through the hours. A pleasant sight and a pleasant life, all but sealed to the white man at his club.

We come away past timber-rafts and palm-encircled villages to Alôn, a place of dark old pagodas and fine trees. In the days of the kings of Burma, Alôn was the seat of a governor and a place of consequence, but the tide of destiny has passed it by.

Dust-winds and clouds of flying sand diversify the uneventful landscape, till we come to Kyauk-hmaw and its tapering spires; beyond which there is a glimpse of mountains in the west soaring between translucent layers of cloud.

At Ayaungthamya Natdaung, which means a great deal to the tutored ear, a wooded and very picturesque promontory, crowned by a white pagoda, ends abruptly in the river in sheer cliffs. Here the river parts finally with its deltaic character, and the transition from the Dry Zone is complete. At Shwezayé the river runs through a narrow defile, two hundred yards in width. On the left bank the village rises above a rocky base, and culminates at a considerable height in a large, well-shaped pagoda. On the right the scenery is of the grand order. The precipices overlooking the river are worn into fantastic forms by the river's action at their base, and above, where they soften into rounded hill-tops, they are clothed with exuberant tropical vegetation. A small pagoda, and a *tagôn-daing* that glitters

in the sun, crown a prominent cliff where the river makes its curve. Shwezayé (the Golden Whirlpool) is a truculent water, and more than one steamer and innumerable small craft have come to grief in its toils. The villagers make a living, like cataract sheikhs, by navigating rafts through it at its turbulent season. On such occasions all the raft people land, and leave their craft entirely to these pilots of the whirlpool. Three miles from Shwezayé there is the crater of a dead volcano, with a lake and a village at its bottom. Strange superstitions cling to this water, which is believed to be of immeasurable depth. Its level is said to rise when the river is low, and to fall when it is in flood.

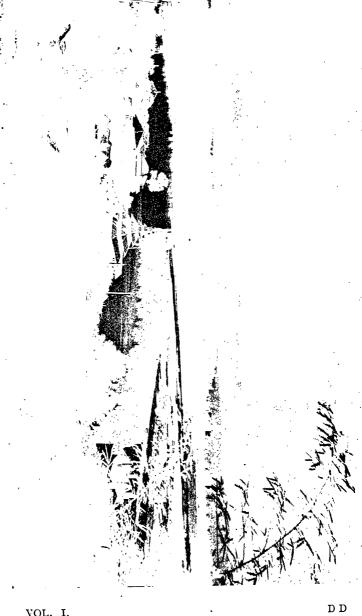
Beyond the defile the river is wider, and the waters held back by its presence stretch unbroken from bank to bank. At Maukko the channel narrows, and here we sleep for the night. The dropping of the anchor is the signal for a general exodus from the ship. The nearest village is two miles away; but an ample sand-bank offers its hospitality to all. The men light their cooking fires, the women take to washing clothes on the gangway planks, the children make sand-castles and roll on the grateful earth. All through the night these good people camp out under the stars, singing, laughing, and telling tales, till a sudden blast of rain towards dawn drives them in confusion to the refuge of the steamer.

As we move on past Natgyi low wooded banks contain the river on either hand. Gaunt trees, that

have survived the year, hold on by their roots with something like desperation; but they are doomed to go with next year's flood. The river's path, as I strain up its vistas, is traceable through a gap in the line of forest, beyond which ranges of hills rise up in successive folds. Each mountain wave varies in colour from its neighbour; each moment sun and cloud ring the changes

UNDER THE STOCKADE, KANI VILLAGE.

from blue to green, the colours of the peacock, and the river moving on its way bestows upon the scene the continuity of sentient life. It is scenery of a restful order, content-bringing, and pleasant to the eyes. The gap as we approach it becomes the gateway of Kani and Kané; the former a lofty cliff surmounted by a pagoda, with a charming village of palms and betel-vines below it, and wooden stairs reaching up from

MINGIN : CHIN HILLS ON THE HORIZON

the water. Here the steamer waits, and the passengers for Kani make their way up the slippery cliff-side and up the narrow stairs, to their own and every one else's entertainment. Amongst them there is one, a pretty girl, with a pink *pawa* blowing over her shoulders and a bale of blue cloth poised on her head, a plump and rather lively caryatid; beside her there is a lad with a heavy cargo, with which he climbs up, every muscle on his fine limbs quivering from the strain of the slippery cliff; next an old dame, withered and lean, in the one scant garment that age here unhappily affects. As the steam from the ship's side puffs out with a sudden roar, enveloping the climbers, the girl laughs and affects to be frightened, hiding her face in her hands. She has for an audience all the village idlers—that is to say, the entire population—and each one of them is vastly interested in the spectacle provided for his entertainment. Every slip in the puddle is greeted with joy, and every passenger on the steamer is discussed with penetrating candour. This is the bi-weekly treat of the village.

The pagoda-crowned spur of Kani is the outwork of an almost continuous line of hills, with a precipitous front overlooking the river. It is known as the Shwé-myinbyu-Taung—or Golden Hill of the White Horse—from a legend which connects it with the fate of a bygone governor of Kani. The governor was viceroy of Anawrata, King of Pagan, in the year 1040 A.D., and he rebelled against his august master. He was utterly defeated and met his death, as the tale runs, by riding

his white pony at full gallop over the cliff into the river beneath. He became in due time a *nat*, and his memory was kept green by the people at an annual festival, till the war of 1885 swept the custom away. A more pleasing tale attributes the name of Kani to the happy fortune of a wild boar, who, being pursued by a prince of the U dynasty, and hard pressed, escaped with his life on the site of the present village.

The remains of a fort, built by King Anawrata's rebellious viceroy, can still be traced on the summit of the cliff. The hills beyond Kani continue in *échelon*. Near the village of Yin-yein, with its pagoda spire glittering like a jewel in the sun, lies the island of Pho-su-ua, clothed with meadows of *kaing* and splendid trees; the first wooded island since we left the Irrawaddy. New and loftier ranges of mountains stretch across the river's horizon and the great colonies of palms have disappeared. Tributary streams come down at intervals, mainly from the west, the level of their great beds many feet above that of the river. When in flood they pour down immense volumes of water with great impetuosity, and the places of their union are dreaded by all who navigate the Chindwin. The current here runs strong, and the deep rustling sound of the steamer contending with it fills the air. Making curve after curve of great range and beauty, and travelling past silvery islands and lofty wooded cliffs, we come to anchor once more at the village of Yindaw.

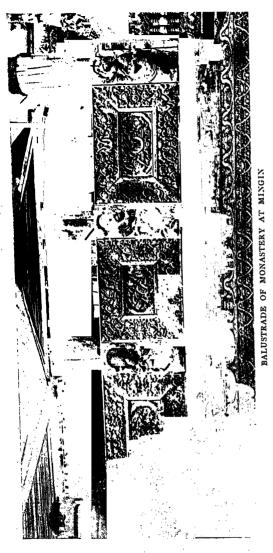
At Maukka-daw, in the dawn, there is a great con-

THE JUNCTION OF THE CHINDWIN AND THE MYITTHA UNDER KALEWA

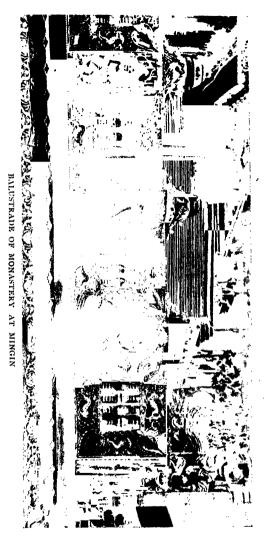
course of people assembled to greet the steamer. Bold cliffs with white faces front the river abruptly, as if they had been cut with a knife. They are pitted with the nesting holes of sand-martins, which wheel and flutter like butterflies before them. Exuberant creepers hang in festoons over the cliff-sides, engulfing whole trees. Up-stream there is a vista of long blue mountain and unruffled water, half-veiled at this hour and season in lifting fog. Higher up, the cliffs are found on the west, the width of the river is unbroken, and its windings conceal its path, so that it looks like a lake, till each curve is accomplished and a new scene challenges the eye.

At Pindin there is a swift transition. The river banks, parting like doors, yield a view of wooded islands, pagoda-crowned promontories, and a lofty range of mountains, whose summits are only partially visible under the clouds. The Patolan here rushes down from the west, pouring in a flood of red waters. The two arms of the Chindwin, sweeping round the island of Chundaw, meet in fierce union, and the strength of their current is a powerful obstacle to progress. The western arm curves round under the heights of Mingin, happily placed between wide spaces of cloud and water, in the forefront of the mountains. Peaks, ten thousand feet in height, are visible from here.

Mingin is a prosperous and cheerful place, the residence of many timber merchants and of people well-to-do. It has a reputation for piety, and contributes *htis* to pagodas and manuscripts to monasteries lower

BALUSTRADE OF MONASTERY AT MINGIN

down the river. "If you want work, go to Kindat; fun, go to Mingin; if you want to die, go," the wise people say, "to Mauk-ka-daw."

The island that divides the river below it becomes at flood time the scene of a curious *battue.* The wild pigs that live there, driven by the encroaching waters, seek shelter in the highest part of the island. Then the villagers go forth with clubs and slay them. It is a beautiful island of dark trees and plantain-groves and waving grasses, set in the wide encircling folds of the river, and the blue Chin mountains tower greatly above it.

After Mingin the river sweeps round under lofty cliffs on the west, separated from its edge by a line of woods. No islands break its continuity. Near Mindin we steer straight in the face of the sun, and the river—steeped in calm, a mirror for the dazzling clouds, the dense thronging forest, and the peaks of the mountains; and diversified with light and shadow, and misty curtains of rain—reaches a climax of beauty At Chaungua, half hidden by an outer wall of cliffs, there are low hills on the west, grassy and lightly wooded, which rise in successive peaks like the teeth of a saw. Reefs stretch across the water

BALUSTRADE OF MONASTERY AT MINGIN

from the eastern shore, and the river pours over them in angry disorder. The village of Phayanga suns itself in the east, under a line of palms, and wide spaces of rice-land spread out, putting all other green things to shame. As the sun descends, the cliffs by the river flame pink, and so go with us into the dusk.

The character of the river grows wilder and more turbulent as we gradually approach its junction with the Myittha at Kalewa. This is a very notable point in its course, and the approach to it loses nothing by its protracted grandeur. Sheer cliffs and rocky islands worn into complex forms; seething whirlpools, the dread of all who must pass through them; forests of primeval richness—these are the main features of the river's course below Kalewa. There are few signs of cultivation. The people are mainly timber-cutters, and raftsmen, and salvors, whose labour is witnessed by the rescued logs on the banks.

At Kongua there is a hamlet very charmingly placed on a little tongue of land at the junction of a small tributary with the river. Its line of brown huts and feathery palms is invisible to the eye till one is very near it. Then a gap discloses itself in the continuous wall of cliffs, and one by one the features of the village deploy. The cliffs facing the river are scarred with white gashes, where a part of the weather-worn surface has been rent away. As the river recedes from its high flood level, it leaves bare the pedestals of the hills which confine it. These are worn into water-holes by the swirling current. Ferns and grasses grow

ENTERING MYITTHA

up between the receding water-line and the woods, making a vivid belt all the way up the curving river. The Péwé whirlpool waits for the unwary just below Kalewa. It is the most dangerous spot on the Chindwin, and steamers have often to wait for days at Kalewa before attempting it. Shut in here amongst the

THE GRAVES OF THE CONQUERORS AT KALEWA

mountains, the river attains a depth of sixty-five fathoms.

Kalewa, famous in the annals of British pacification in Upper Burma, owes its importance to the fact that it stands where the Myittha pours its waters into the Chindwin; and the Myittha is the key to Chinland, that vast sub-Alpine tract of savagery, which reaches away, a barrier since the beginning of things, between Burma and India. From Kalewa as a base, the wild highlands of Chinland were conquered, and for years

this village, hidden in remote places, resounded to the tread of armed battalions on their way to the scene of war. Heroes like Sir George White and Sir Power Palmer have stepped ashore at Kalewa. Its main street is built on the blade-edge of a narrow promontory, between the swift Myittha and the Chindwin. An amphitheatre of hills surrounds it. From the river it looks like a dilapidated collection of hovels, but the street itself runs through a double line of shops, in which many English goods are exhibited for sale, and it gains picturesqueness from its overhanging palms, its betel-vines, and scarlet-tasselled hibiscus. The slopes of the promontory overlooking the Myittha are sheer, and, in spite of piles, appear to be giving way to the river's attack. On the summit of the ridge are placed the barracks of the military police, and the houses of the European officers who live here, to maintain the empire their hands have helped to build. On the hill-slope, facing the Chindwin, and often flooded by its rising waters, are the graves of those who have died in the same cause. Under the foreshore lie the flat boats of the country, shallow of draught and incapable of turning over, but rough in workmanship and outline, and not to be compared for beauty with the great boats of the Irrawaddy builders. One can tell a Chindwin boat anywhere in Burma. The Myittha is navigable by boats as far as Kan, and steamers have ascended it a hundred and twenty miles. But the numerous rapids which mark its course make its navigation hazardous and difficult